

Ali Rahnama

AN ISLAMIC UTOPIAN
A Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati



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Preface

The political biography of Ali Shari'ati, considered by many as the ideological father of the Iranian revolution of 1979, is not only an account of one person's life but of the cultural, social and political conditions that reared him. Ali Shari'ati's life spans the highly sensitive period of change during which a conscious effort was made by the Pahlavi dynasty to push Iran from its presumed traditional status towards a Western-defined state of modernity. A product of the transformation initiated by Reza Shah, during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, Ali Shari'ati became actively involved in, and was greatly influenced by, the multifarious changes that Iranian society underwent in terms of economics, politics, ethics, culture, poetry, prose, film, journalism and even religion. A synthesis of many contradictory currents, Shari'ati became an instrumental figure in the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty. In this respect, his life reflects the convulsions of a culturally rich and historically ancient society confronted with the tides of changing times.

A society in a state of flux witnesses new alignments. Ideas and positions become polarized and those convinced of the absolute truth of their own are at a disadvantage when it comes to synthesis. Those in favour of an ideal modernity at all costs become as inflexible in their assessment of what is and what ought to be as those who cling to a traditional religion as their last defence in the face of pressing necessities. True believers, fixed in their ways, they never question. For Iranians, the genuine need for modernity and the struggle to protect Islam became a contradictory dilemma. Modernity was westward-looking, change-oriented and anti-traditional, while Islam was the formal cornerstone of society's established traditional values, a deeply-valued reliable cultural heritage. For a majority of intellectuals, Islam and modernity presented a trade-off. The choice of a path to modernity – economic, political and ideological – posed itself only after modernity was pursued at the cost of religion. This clash of powerful contradictory ideas left a few intellectuals – a third group who sought a union of opposites – in a limbo of uncertainty. Ali Shari'ati was of this group.

In his youth, and later in his active life, Shari'ati's praxis was the testing ground of his beliefs. Even though his vision of the ideal society was formed relatively

early in his life, the method and approach of attaining that ideal underwent considerable transformation. Over the years Shari'ati came to believe in – and in turn to reject – just about every way of political struggle available to the activist. Trial and error proved that certain modes of political action thought to be impossible in a particular socio-political environment could prove to be viable and effective under special circumstances. In these particular circumstances, never clearly discernable in advance, truisms in social sciences are there to be refuted. Who would have thought that open political agitation in speeches, articles and books would be permitted or neglected in a state which could not tolerate the least criticism?

To understand Shari'ati the man, one has to understand the spirit and customs of his time and place. In his society chivalry, honour and sacrifice were virtues. Sacrifice in the pursuit of honour incurs pain. The pleasure of pain and longing becomes the motor of life. In this society worthy men are those who have a pain, who live with it and never directly divulge it. It is the inward and outward scars that make a man. The hedonistic happy-go-luckys are boys who need to mature. In this tradition, romantic youth fall in love not to consummate their love, but to cherish the longing and the pain. This is the Oriental conception of a Platonic love. The creativity and originality that the pain causes pours itself into the poems, prose and sketches that young men such as Shari'ati produced. Shari'ati's poetry, romantic, political, or self-destructive, recounted the story of a pain. His sentimental romantic stories and his visionary Sufi words of ecstasy, were all narratives of longing and the heart-warming feeling of unfulfilled metaphysical love. Revolutionaries of all kinds; practitioners, intellectuals or preachers, are lovers of utopias and display all symptoms of an earthly lover at a metaphysical level. This is why Shari'ati always thought that even Marxist revolutionaries willing to die for a cause, were metaphysical idealists who were willing to sacrifice their most precious material belonging for an ideal cause.

The trajectory of Shari'ati's life resembles that of a generation of provincial young men who, by chance or divine providence, were sent to Europe on government scholarships. In Shari'ati's case, the cultural experience added to his other contradictory currents. Yet Shari'ati's curiosity allowed him to absorb all that went on around him in Europe. He observed and learnt, without losing sight of his objective – the synthesis of modernity and religion as the solution to the problems of his country. His skepticism and uncertainty bred a bold inquisitiveness. His receptivity to new ideas allowed him to articulate a new language. Shari'ati's words and concepts, which later impregnated minds and moved crowds, were nothing but the readily comprehensible synthesis of the many everyday theories and debates that he had heard. His patched-up doctrine was a redefined amalgam of different paradigms. Yet his language and his paradigm penetrated the minds and hearts of his audience. Shari'ati always spoke of the pain – his own – that he had to cry out. His mesmerizing political speeches were an echo of a political, economic and religious system that pained him.

When I began my research for this book I had no predisposition, value-judge-

ment or bias concerning Shari'ati. Convinced of his impact on the young and of his subsequent intellectual influence on the turn of events in Iran, I simply wished to understand the man and his life. The more I learnt about him, the more I was intrigued by his complexity and the aura of enigma surrounding him. I am neither judge nor prosecutor and certainly not the jury. I have tried to reconstruct a life on the basis of the information I have obtained. Wherever possible this has been double-checked. Where controversial episodes are discussed, opposing views have been presented. So far as the use of information available to me is concerned, as an Iranian I am still proudly bound by certain invisible cultural covenants. Cheap journalistic scoops cannot make up for low quality intellectual products.

In the process of my research in Iran, I came across a young, heavily bearded book-seller who, after testing my intentions, not only found me a three-volume rare collection written by one of Shari'ati's clerical detractors, but even offered to introduce me to the author. Before handing me the books, he said, 'So much is being said about Shari'ati, yet I have never honestly understood this man. Was he a saint or the devil himself? If you shed some light on him, I would receive my real recompense (*ajr*). I promised to do my best.

Acknowledgements

The realization of this book would not have been possible without the help of many individuals, the majority of whom I did not even know before I embarked on this project. At each bend on the road, where the contours of Shari'ati's life became more hazy than usual, someone came forth with a clear road-sign. My own homework, based on Shari'ati's writings and the writings on him, alone was not enough to understand the man during the different periods of his life. The interviews with all those who were kind enough to answer my questions without any prior acquaintance with me were indispensable for the realization of this work.

In Iran I consulted the Library of Tehran University, the National Library, the Majlis Library and the Astan-e Ghods Razavi Library in Mashhad. My deepest gratitude to all those who helped me, beyond the call of duty and without the slightest material expectation, to find what I needed in the newspaper archives. In Paris I regularly consulted the newspapers and publications at the Iranian Center for Documentation and Research.

The topic of Ali Shari'ati is still a quasi-taboo, and people do not candidly volunteer to speak about it. I am therefore greatly indebted to all those who generously gave their time and patiently shared their information on Shari'ati with me. I am also beholden to all those who provided me with unpublished primary sources, documents and published material as well as to those who wish to remain anonymous. I initially made a list of all those who helped me directly and indirectly with my research. It came to exactly eighty seven people. Without the help of each and every single one of them this work would have been that much weaker. They know who they are and I am most grateful to them. The opinions and shortcomings are obviously mine.

My special thanks goes to a teacher of my adolescent years and a very dear friend during my adult life. In spite of his disinterest in the subject, Yahya Dehqanpur, helped me at every step. Together we unearthed the books and manifestos of Shari'ati's detractors from the piles of books at the small book shops he knew near Shams ol-emareh. In libraries, we sifted through newspapers

looking for the writings of Shari'ati's youth. He helped me with research back in Iran which I could not do myself. Whenever I desperately needed a reference, he found it and got it to me on time. On more than one occasion he saved me from what could have been important oversights and omissions. I would like to express my special gratitude to my wife, Mariam, who patiently put up with my excitements, anxieties and reconstruction of events at odd hours of the day and night over the five years of my research, and who read the whole manuscript and carefully edited it.

Finally I would like to dedicate this book to the wonderful memory of Badri, my mother, a staunch lover of Imam Ali's legendary justice and an admirer of Shari'ati's pen; Hamid, my father, who taught me moral values, and to my paternal grandparents – Zakiyeh, a noble and gracious mystic whose piety never impaired her tolerance and Zeinolabeddin, a scholar, politician and an admirable writer.

Also with an eye to the future, I hope that some day my children Reza and Zahra, the natural bridges between a rich Iranian heritage and the modern Western world would read this book and learn something about their country's contemporary history and a name which they often heard and repeated during their childhood, Ali Aqa-ye Shari'ati.

Paris, Autumn 1997

The Political and Religious Setting

In August 1941, when the Allies invaded Iran, Ali Shari'ati was eight years old. Reza Shah, who harboured pro-German sympathies, was forced to abdicate the throne in favour of his son Mohammad-Reza and was banished to Mauritius.

Modernization from above and an iron-fisted centralization of power, fashioned on the model of a military campaign, 'necessitating' the brutal repression of dissent, characterized Reza Shah's reign. His modernization and industrialization drive was basically patterned on that of Western European countries. He firmly believed that he had seen the light of progress and, irrespective of Iran's economic and cultural specificities, he was intent on enforcing it. In his mind, the attractive Western economic structures, institutions and achievements, were distinct and exclusive from the legal and political institutions that coexisted with them. Furthermore, Reza Shah found it a simple matter to reconcile his perpetual quest for self-enrichment and dictatorial power with his proclaimed pursuit of national glory and welfare. What was good for the shah had to be good for the country.

In his bid for power Reza Khan had to make promises and conclude certain alliances based on mutual interest with different social groups. Once in power, he was clearly not going to keep them. Reza Shah's relationship with the clergy is a case in point. In 1924, the long process of Turkey's transformation from a sultanate-caliphate into a secular republic was completed. The position of the sultan as both the sovereign and the ultimate religious authority responsible for the protection of the Muslim faith, was replaced by an elected president free of religious titles, duties or obligations. A religio-political state was thus secularized and religion removed from the political realm. The implications of this metamorphosis for the significance, power and survival of Islam sent shudders through the clerical institutions of the Muslim world.

Early in 1924, Reza Khan, who under Ahmad Shah had risen to the rank of minister of war and then prime minister, had the idea of establishing a republic and proclaiming himself president. Four weeks before the inauguration of the fifth Majles (parliament), a number of prominent Tehran newspapers started attacking Ahmad Shah, the Qajar dynasty and the system of monarchy, which they blamed for the misfortunes of the country. As Reza Khan's supporters in the new parliament rallied to the cause of a republican Iran, talk of following the footsteps

... Mustafa Kemal in Turkey and the imminent establishment of a republic became widespread.

To the Iranian clergy the secularization of Turkey, the replacement of the Shari'a with man-made laws, was analogous to replacing divine rule with that of man. Adamant that a similar process would not take place in Iran, the clergy opposed any attempt at establishing a republic. In their battle they used their religious influence and leverage among the people whom they sought to convince that the idea of a republic was 'concocted in London and anti-Islamic'.¹ They soon succeeded in mobilizing opinion. On 22 March 1924, the Majles, which was debating a motion that would make Iran into a republic,² was surrounded by huge crowds. Among the crowd, republican sentiments, whipped up by Reza Khan and his followers, were soon drowned by chants of 'long-live the King, death to Sardar Sepah,' and 'we are the followers of the Qur'an, we do not want a republic'.³ On the orders of Reza Khan troops attacked and dispersed these anti-republican protesters. Soon the commotion outside the Majles found its way inside. A heated argument broke out between Reza Khan and the Majles president, Mo'tamen al-Molk, who reprimanded the minister of war for ordering his troops to attack. The incident ended with Reza Khan apologizing,⁴ but the tension surrounding the issue of a republic or a monarchy continued to grow. During the following days demonstrations led by the clergy erupted in Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan and Qom while delegations of merchants, ulama, and peoples' trustees met with Reza Khan in an attempt to dissuade him from pursuing the idea of a republic.⁵

Realizing the gravity of the situation, on 31 March 1924 Reza Khan visited the holy city of Qom to meet with its most prominent religious dignitaries – Ayatollahs Abd al-Karim Ha'eri, Mohammad Hossein Na'ini, Abolhasan Musavi Esfahani, Hasan Tabataba'i, Abd al-Hossein Shirazi and Javad Saheb-e Javaher. Criticized and reprimanded by a number of these men,⁶ the following day he issued an important statement, reflecting the prevailing balance of power between him and the clergy. In it he declared that, having consulted with the religious dignitaries of Qom, he had decided to abandon the idea of establishing a republic. His decision, he said, was motivated by his desire not to oppose the will of the majority, his concern for safeguarding the independence and welfare of the nation and by his prime objective of defending Islam, securing its grandeur and assuring public respect for the *rowhaniyat* (members of the clerical institution). Reza Khan also announced that the clergy had also pledged to cooperate with him in his task of 'removing all obstacles to the progress and reform of the country.'⁷

Reza Khan had come to understand the power and popularity of the clergy who in late 19th-century Iran had constituted a highly significant political force. To gain their support, or at least their non-opposition, he set out to accommodate them. In an attempt to placate the flamboyant Majles deputy – and clergyman – Modarres, on 9 August 1924 he appointed two of the latter's close friends, Firuz Mirza Nosrat al-Dowleh and Shokrollah Khan Qavam al-Dowleh Sadri to the sensitive cabinet positions of Minister of Finance and Interior.⁸ The two appointments,

it is said, were made at the behest of Modarres himself to whom Reza Khan was effectively giving positions in the government in exchange for his cooperation.⁹

In another astute political move, Reza Khan sought to convince the people of his own religiosity, thereby gaining popular trust. He participated in religious ceremonies and rituals, visited the holy shrines including Karbala, prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages and appointed a religious inspector to all schools to ensure proper religious education. Religious inspectors were also appointed to safeguard proper standards in all publications and plays.¹⁰

From 20 August 1924, the Majles and the newspaper offices of Tehran were flooded with letters and telegrams demanding an end to the Qajar dynasty and Reza Khan's accession to the throne.¹¹ A wave of demonstrations in the major cities of the country followed. The republican forces had, it seemed, allied themselves with the anti-republican forces to call for a new dynasty. On 31 October 1924, the Majles voted to depose the Qajar dynasty and replace it with a new Pahlavi dynasty.¹² Two days later, Reza Khan issued a proclamation in which he reiterated that his programme and policies would be based on two fundamental principles – the application of all Islamic injunctions and the welfare of all people.¹³

Despite his initial concessions to the clergy, in less than a decade Reza Shah had introduced wide-ranging reforms which amounted to a policy of forced secularization. Two rather different reasons lay behind this anti-clerical drive. First, having consolidated his position, Reza Khan sought to neutralize, repress or physically eliminate all possible contenders for power, of which the clergy was certainly one. Second, the rapid imposition of modernization and Westernization from above undermined and eventually necessitated a rupture with traditional, and therefore Islamic, institutions, customs and values. From Reza Shah's point of view, the clergy not only posed a potential danger to his own power, but had the legitimate and social influence to block reforms he considered necessary for modernization and the exercise of his personal autocratic rule.

In his anti-clerical drive, Reza Shah employed both legal and repressive measures. At times it became difficult to distinguish one from the other. The Majles, which he fully controlled, enacted one set of laws and decrees directly aimed at attacking and depriving the clergy of their customary rights and jurisdiction, and another aimed at modernizing society and the state apparatus, *inter alia* reducing clerical power and social involvement. To humiliate and demean the clergy, he applied force and repression against them and their values. In this way he hoped to break their aura of invincibility and sanctity.

Among the measures directly aimed at the clergy, two effectively cut off their control over religious education and their financial source of livelihood. Decrees such as that issued on 7 March 1929 on the Examination of Religious Students and Identification of Teachers of the Religious Sciences, subjected the clerical educational system to the authority and supervision of the Ministry of Education.¹⁴ These regulations reduced 'the number of students and teachers in religious schools.'¹⁵ A law on religious endowments, in turn, placed their administration in

the hands of the Endowments Department of the Ministry of Education.¹⁶ Since the majority of mosques and religious schools (*madrases*) along with the stipends provided for students of theology (*tullab*), were financed by clerically-administered endowments, this law cut the clergy off from a key material base and diminished the social role they derived from their power to allocate such funds.

Among the measures introduced to modernize society and the state apparatus two in particular had serious implications for the clergy. The first was a series of laws designed to modernize the legal system. Civil law was codified using the French system as a model. The new civil code was drafted by a parliamentary committee presided over by Ali-Akbar Davar, the Minister of Justice. Although the clergy were represented on this committee, and texts used in Shi'i jurisprudence such as *Sharaye' al-Eslam* and *Sharh al-Luma* were consulted, the code, ratified by the Majles in the spring of 1928, significantly reduced the purview and role of the religious courts. On 5 March 1928, a number of requirements were set for the practice of law. One of these was the possession of a law degree obtained from a national or foreign university. Such a condition essentially barred those trained in traditional religious seminaries from practising law.¹⁷ Four years later, in the spring of 1932, Reza Shah stripped the religious (*shar'*) courts of their legal and social powers and transferred another traditionally clerical function – the registration and certification of documents such as property titles, wills and affidavits – to secular offices.¹⁸ Again, not only did the measure curtail the social and legal power of the clergy; it also inflicted a heavy financial blow, since earnings from such notary services constituted an important source of their income.

The second measure was a Law on the Uniformity of Dress ratified by the Majles on 27 December 1928. This law enforced a uniform style of clothing on the population. All men were obliged to wear Western-style clothing and a cap-like hat with a visor which came to be known as the Pahlavi hat. Among the clergy only those certified by the government were permitted to wear the frock and the turban. The clergy were subjected to the humiliation of either wearing Western clothing or going through the difficult and demeaning process of applying to the government to have their credentials recognized. Significantly, the dress code also obliged the wives of officials to wear Western hats instead of the Islamic veil. The gradual process of un-veiling women was thus under way.

Where the legal system could not deliver the kind of results that Reza Shah expected, he resorted to arbitrary punitive actions and summary executions. His victims came from all walks of life: poets, journalists, tribal leaders, members of the military, members of the clergy, old friends and supporters and even loyal cabinet members. Yet in dealing with the clergy he was intent on sending the social message that if clerical leaders were forced to bow to his power, others of lesser social lustre should know their place. On the night of 21 March 1927, the queen mother, escorted by a group of courtiers, attended the religious ceremonies at the shrine of Hazrat-e Ma'sumeh at Qom. Some of the ladies in the group were

not properly clad for the occasion and were subsequently told by an angry Sheikh to cover themselves properly or 'get lost'. At the behest of an angry crowd, Sheikh Mohammad Bafqi ordered the group out of the shrine.¹⁹ The next day Reza Shah personally led an armed column to Qom, surrounded the shrine and caned Sheikh Mohammad Bafqi in public.²⁰ According to Reza Afshar, at the next cabinet meeting, Reza Shah bragged about his conduct on this occasion and said, 'one should be harsh with these people (the clergy)'.²¹ By 8 October 1928, Reza Shah felt secure enough to order the arrest and imprisonment of Seyyed Hasan Modarres, probably the most respected and popular cleric of his time. Reza Shah suspected that Modarres would strongly oppose the dress code that was to be put into effect two months later.

Reza Shah's policy of confrontation with the clergy reached its climax on 21 and 22 July 1935, when he ordered an assault on the Gowharshad Mosque in Mashhad. Public feelings at the mosque had been aroused by the forced unveiling of women and people had gathered to protest. The unprecedented act of attacking and causing bloodshed in a mosque by the so-called defender of the faith was a clear signal that Reza Shah was not going to tolerate any act of dissent or obstruction to his conception of statesmanship. Less than two years after the Gowharshad incident, Reza Shah finally settled scores with Modarres, the real symbol of clerical political power who after nine years of incarceration, was brutally murdered on 2 December 1936 in Khaf prison. The fact that this event did not result in any acts of protest demonstrated how effectively Reza Shah had become an absolute ruler, responsible to no one and capable of anything.

Under Reza Shah's rule, political dissent and opposition, whether secular or religious, was muted. The apparent success of his policy of up-rooting religious convictions, sensitivities and practices depended upon the continuous application of force and coercion. Threatened by the public demonstration of their religiosity, people practised religious rites, rituals and ceremonies at home behind closed doors. The government believed that it could usher secularism by acts such as banning passion plays (*ta'ziyeh*) and allowing the consumption of alcohol in restaurants, hotels and permitting a certain number of liquor stores. But as the number of unveiled women increased on the streets, the clergy, wearing the compulsory Western garb, tucked their turban and frock under their arms as they scurried from house to house performing religious ceremonies. Among their audience, some were those who benefited from the legality of consuming alcohol, some were the same women who had removed their veils outside the house and some were traditional Muslims who continued to regard Reza Shah as an enemy of religion. While newspapers attacked the clergy and popular religious practices, religious mourning sessions (*rowzeh khani*), remained as, if not more popular, than before. While Reza Shah basked in the glory of the secularization of Iran, the people had adjusted themselves to a double life of public secularism and private religiosity. It might even be argued that Reza Shah's coercive policy of clericalization increased the religious zeal and fervour of the population.

The departure of Reza Shah in 1941 led to the breakdown of the centralized and autocratic political system which he had created. International circumstances and the power vacuum in Iran ushered a period of political freedom. A conducive atmosphere for the rapid growth and propagation of different social, political, philosophical and religious outlooks came into existence. After sixteen years of dictatorship, a wide spectrum of political, cultural and religious groups, circles and organizations, from the left to the right of the political spectrum, sprung into existence. The clergy witnessed their triumph as their customary private and public mourning sessions and practices attracted crowds of pious Muslims who now felt obliged to make up for the period of religious repression. In a great act of redemption, accumulated and unsettled past sins had to be cleansed by greater religious activity.

Among the plethora of intellectual tendencies and political organizations, two posed a major challenge to Islam: the Tudeh party, which constituted an exogenous philosophical and ideological threat and the Kasravi tendency, which could be considered as a rationalist threat from within the faith.

The Tudeh Party

The Marxist-Leninist Tudeh party of Iran came into official existence on 28 September 1941. It considered itself the only progressive party in Iran in which 'nationalists and freedom lovers of different persuasions such as communists, social-democrats, anti-fascists and anti-despots had come together.'²² The Tudeh party adamantly presented itself as a democratic, anti-colonial and anti-fascist popular front. Soviet officials are said to have rejected the Iranian Communists' desire to establish a 'pure' communist party and in the general guidelines set for the Tudeh to have stressed that it should disassociate itself from communism and Marxism.²³ This type of discourse allowed the Tudeh to attract sympathizers from all social groups without necessarily alienating those who considered themselves nationalists. Originally, the party even denied its adherence to communism, retorting that such claims were 'allegations' made by the pro-British supporters of Seyyed Ziaeddin Tabataba'i.²⁴ It was not until twenty years later, in the party's 1960 statutes, that an explicit reference was made to Marxist-Leninist ideology. On the sensitive issue of religion the Tudeh Party went out of its way not to offend the sensitivities of the people. Cunningly, it claimed to be a supporter of Islam, announced that the majority of its members were Muslims, assured the public that its members respected and valued the 'Mohammadan way' and that the Party itself would never embark on a collision course with religion nor embrace an ideology in contradiction with Islam.²⁵ Understanding the public mood, it refrained from any open or direct attacks on Islam or the clergy. Instead of getting bogged down in controversial debates on the existence of God, the role of religion in society, or even the position of religion in Marxian thought, it embarked on attracting intel-

lectuals and educated professionals by presenting itself as the only viable upholder of social justice, freedom, peace and anti-fascism. Once sympathizers became party members, they were gradually exposed to the basic tenets of 'scientific socialism' based on dialectical materialism.

From the day it was launched, only a month after the Allied invasion of Iran, the Tudeh party began its activities in the provinces. In Mashhad at that time there were no universities. The Tudeh therefore focused its initial recruitment activities on the three high schools and the city's teachers' training college. As a result, these educational institutions became the arena of heated debates between teachers and students of different persuasions. The main participants in the battle for recruitment were the followers of the Tudeh party, the Kasravists, and an initially non-organized Islamic group around Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati. The Tudeh party benefited from the wealth of intellectual output that had already been produced in the Soviet Union and was systematically translated and distributed in Iran. It also possessed the financial support of the Soviet Union, which rendered its propaganda work efficient and more effective. Furthermore, in 1946, its policy-making power was greatly enhanced by the inclusion of three prominent Tudeh party members in the Qavam al-Saltaneh government.

The Kasravi Tendency

Ahmad Kasravi, born in 1890, came from a traditional clerical family. While still a seminary student in Tabriz, his home town, he came into contact with militants of the constitutionalist movement. The 1905 constitutionalist movement in Iran had driven a wedge between the clergy. Some rallied to its support and legitimized it while others argued that an Islamic form of government can only be based on the Shari'a. The clerical opponents of the movement accused its proponents of seeking to impose the will of the people over that of God. From the early age of sixteen, Kasravi became a pro-constitutionalist.

Kasravi's experience with the every day private and social conduct of Muslims confronted him with a major epistemological problem. He witnessed certain acts and practices prevalent among the Shi'a for which he could not find sources or evidence in Islamic jurisprudence that he considered sound, and which he could not rationally explain. He also observed that those same Muslims refrained from certain acts which he believed were incumbent upon any pious believer. He identified a rupture between what he considered as the essence of the faith, the observation of which would have secured the welfare of the believers, and the outward signs or the form of the faith, which he believed to have developed into a superstitious series of futile rites and rituals. Cut off from worldly affairs, which according to Kasravi were the concern of religion, the Shi'a were, he concluded, still grappling with the problems and circumstances of 1,300 years ago. Shi'i Muslims, he observed were neither concerned with the national integrity and prosperity

of their country, nor with colonialism and the reasons for the subjugation of the Eastern countries to European powers.²⁶

In Kasravi's mind, pursuing the essence of the faith resulted in social benefits. The deep preoccupation of the Shi'a with religious formalities, however, deprived them of the means to improve their socioeconomic condition. He maintained that excess zeal in practising what he considered to be 'impurities', which had crept into the faith, was the cause of the peoples' state of deprivation and underdevelopment. According to Kasravi, Islam, was the guiding-torch of the people in their pursuit of welfare, yet at the hands of the Shi'a it had become the source of their, deception and misfortune.²⁷

Although Kasravi had written an important book called *Shari'at Ahmadi* on the *osul* and *foru'* of Islam and Shi'ism, he gradually began to question not only the role and legitimacy of the clergy, but even the basis of Shi'ism. He distinguished two different types of Islam: the Islam of the pious Prophet and the Islam of all the various sects that had emerged from the spread of the religion. According to Kasravi, the two were opposed to one another.²⁸ Existing Islam was an institution run by the clerics, beneficial to no one and the source of great misfortunes.²⁹ The object of religion, he argued, was to secure the welfare of the people by finding solutions to their daily problems such as poverty, unemployment and ill health. These, he believed, were the acts which would please God.³⁰

According to Kasravi, the clergy did not perform their expected role. Instead of functioning as the enlightened shepherd who would lead his flock to spiritual and material felicity, they misled the people, perpetrated ignorance, deprivation and superstition. Kasravi reproached the clergy on several counts. He derided their role in deepening the animosity between Shi'i and Sunni Muslims.³¹ He attacked the custom of building shrines for the Imams and characterized their worship as idolatry. He accused the clergy of deceiving the people by encouraging them to go on pilgrimages as a means of attaining salvation or as a guarantee for the realization of a miracle. Kasravi argued that 'a reward can be expected only for a useful act. Why would one merit a reward from God for such a futile exercise?'³² The lavish expenditure on pilgrimage, he maintained, was best spent on feeding and clothing the hungry and the poor.³³ He mocked the concept of mediation (*shafa'at*), according to which on Judgement Day, the Imams would request the salvation of a sinner from God and obtain it if only he were to mourn the imams, visit their shrines and petition them with prayers (*tavaso*).³⁴ Kasravi revolted against what he called the cult of personality of Shi'i Imams which had led to the Shi'i custom of 'people worshipping'.³⁵ Thus Kasravi claimed that the faith had to be cleansed from all its impurities and called for a return to its original essence. Many of Kasravi's above mentioned criticisms of Shi'i rituals and practices as well as his view on the role of the traditional clergy, later found its echo in modernist Islamic circles and especially in the works of Ali Shari'ati.

Kasravi, who at first seemed to be a reformer of Shi'ism, later hardened his position and became anti-Shi'i. In his book *Shi'igari*, 'The practice of Shi'ism', he

bases his refutations of Shi'i beliefs on the Qur'an, the practice of the Prophet and of Imam Ali. Throughout the book he remains highly respectful and reverential towards Imam Ali, Imam Hossein and their original followers. According to Kasravi, two factors were instrumental in institutionalizing the deviations and aberrations of the Shi'i faith: Imam Ja'far Sadeq, the sixth Shi'i Imam and the founder of Shi'i *feqh* (jurisprudence) and the Safavid dynasty. Whereas Imam Hossein revolted against Mo'awiya to regain his right to the caliphate, Kasravi, argues that Imam Ja'far Sadeq claimed himself to be the rightful and God-ordained imam, yet instead of struggling for his right, he chose the safety of his home. Proclaiming power without wishing to challenge the existing political power necessarily bred certain problems. According to Kasravi, the Shi'i practice of dissimulation of one's real beliefs (*taqiyyeh*) when survival is at stake, was in fact a means of deception which legitimized falsehood.³⁶ The Safavid rulers who wished to prove their Shi'i zeal went to extremes to uphold established Shi'i rituals and rites. With the active collaboration of the clergy, they accentuated, those aspects which Kasravi believed to be impurities. They institutionalized the custom of insulting Abu Bakr, Omar and Osman, thereby deepening the hatred between Shi'a and Sunnis. It was also during their time that Islam became synonymous with observing certain formal rituals such as attending and weeping at mourning sessions (*rowzeh-khani*), going on pilgrimages and petitioning the imams with prayers. Later, Shari'ati too, identified Safavid Shi'ism as a 'polytheistic' religion. Kasravi's attack on the practices of certain Islamic jurists (*foqaha*) and the Safavids, under whose rule Shi'ism became Iran's official religion and the Shi'i clergy obtained power and prestige, was a challenge to the dominant perception of Islamic practices. Kasravi, however, was very careful not to question or negate any of the three fundamental basis of Islam, namely monotheism, prophethood and resurrection.

From the Shi'i community's point of view, Kasravi crossed the Rubicon when he attacked the authenticity of certain essential pillars of Twelver Shi'i thought and insulted certain highly revered Shi'i infallibles. He rejected the commonly held Shi'i belief that the first three caliphs had usurped the position of Imam Ali.³⁷ He challenged the concept of imamate, or the right of Imam Ali and his male lineage to the religious and temporal leadership of the Islamic community. Kasravi rejected the infallibility of the Twelve Imams, ridiculed the existence of the Twelfth Imam and consequently the central Shi'i notion of his occultation and his promised return on earth.³⁸ In his writings, he demeaned several of the imams and Fatemeh, the daughter of the Prophet and Ali's wife.³⁹ Kasravi repudiated the axiomatic theoretical basis of Shi'ism. His criticism was no longer directed against one or another member of the clergy, certain practices or rituals, but the content, object and *raison d'être* of the Shi'i faith. His discourse had become anti-Shi'a. Having had a traditional clerical education, Kasravi must have anticipated the traditional response of the clerical community to his discourse. He was murdered by a member of the Feda'ian-e Islam on 10 March 1946.

Kasravi's criticism of the mechanical, superstitious, ahistorical and dogmatic

Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati: Father and Teacher

'He taught me the art of thinking'

nature of Shi'ism, as it was practised in his days, left an undeniable mark on those Muslims who sought to modernize their religion. Kasravi's tumultuous life and his fate also indicated the extent and limitations of an open attack on certain rituals and practices, the clergy and ultimately certain fundamentals of the faith.

The controversy around Kasravi's arguments and his assassination could not have escaped the thirteen-year-old, inquisitive Ali Shari'ati. It could be justifiably argued that both Mohammad-Taqi and Ali Shari'ati were sensitive to and influenced by Kasravi's denunciation of Shi'i excesses and the clerical institution. According to Taher Ahmadzadeh, Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati believed that some of Kasravi's criticisms were valid.⁴⁰ Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati concurred with Kasravi that certain often-practised rites and rituals which had become known as a part of Shi'ism had in fact nothing to do with Shi'ism, while certain others were outright objectionable. It is said that Shari'ati further supported Kasravi's contention that religion was a part of everyday life and not simply concerned with the 'hereafter' as many clerical figures maintained.⁴¹

During his stay in Paris, Ali Shari'ati sent home a list of books he needed in preparation for a lecture on 'New Islamic Currents in Iran'. Among the works he requested were those of Bazargan, Motahhari, Tabataba'i, Sa'idi, Shari'at-e Sanglaji and Kasravi. On this list, only Kasravi's name was underlined.⁴²

Even though in private Ali Shari'ati defended a number of Kasravi's criticisms, he had to be more careful about his position in public. Later, when Shari'ati became the hero of young and radical Islamic modernists, he was forced to evade the question of what he thought of Kasravi and his works. Instead, he argued that as much as Kasravi's criticisms might have been correct, he should not have raised them at that particular historical moment since more pressing socio-political and economic matters needed attention. Shari'ati argued that instead of attacking the *Masnavi* and *Mafateeh al-jenan* ('The key to the heavens'), an important Shi'i book of prayers, Kasravi should have mobilized the country's youth against the source of its real problem, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.⁴³ Shari'ati's public criticism of Kasravi was limited to his misjudgement of the circumstances and did not touch the content of his works. Ironically, in 1968, Amir-Parviz Puyan and Mas'ud Ahmadzadeh, Shari'ati's Marxist detractors, accused him of the same error – his inability to grasp the sensitivity of the circumstances. They charged him with distracting his students with abstract religio-philosophical concepts instead of providing them with a 'scientific' tool with which they could ultimately overthrow the Shah's regime through an armed struggle.⁴⁴ Shari'ati's clerical opponents, however, compared him to Kasravi and denounced him as a far more outrageous enemy of Islam.⁴⁵

Mohammad-Taqi (Mazinani) Shari'ati, came from an old professional religious family. His grandfather, Akhond Molla Qorban-Ali, better known as Akhond Hakim, was educated at the religious seminaries of Bukhara, Najaf and Mashhad.¹ He eventually settled in Mazinan, a small village on the edge of the desert in Khorasan, as the principle religious authority of the region. Although he was given a house in Mazinan, Akhond Hakim felt neither at home nor very useful until, at his request, the people of the area built a school. Once he was able to begin educating the young – and the older – members of his flock his life acquired meaning. Akhond Hakim's eldest son Mahmud also became a cleric and continued to live in Mazinan. His youngest son Mohammad-Taqi was born there in 1907. Locally, the family had a reputation for piety, social service and asceticism.²

Mohammad-Taqi followed in the footsteps of his two eldest brothers. In 1928, after Reza Shah's dress code became law, he went to the shrine city of Mashhad to join them and pursue his theological studies at the Mashhad Seminary, which was second only in academic reputation to that of Qom. A few years later, with the birth of his first son Ali on 24 November 1933, he started to teach at a secular primary school, Sherafat, while pursuing the introductory (*moqadamat*) level of theological studies.³ In 1936, a year after the attack on the Gowharshad mosque in Mashhad, Mohammad-Taqi discontinued his theological studies at the intermediate (*sath*) level to embark upon a full time teaching career at the Ibn Yamin secondary school. He recalled that with his educational background he could, like many of his peers, have joined the Ministry of Justice and secured a better paid position, but believed that he could render a greater service by becoming a teacher.⁴

Mohammad-Taqi thus broke with two long-standing family traditions. Firstly, upon the completion of his studies he did not return to the family home in Mazinan and secondly, although he was equipped to become a clergyman, he chose to wear a Western suit and *chapeau* instead of traditional religious garb, the *aba* and turban. Yet he followed the most essential family profession of teaching, taking it upon himself to educate those he believed to be the future agents of change in

...the young Islamic intellectuals. For this purpose he needed to study the literature which attracted them, employ the language and jargon with which they communicated and adopt their dress code.

The year 1941 was a watershed in Iran's history. The rapid changes in the political environment forced individuals to reconsider their activities and their previously defined objectives in life. Under the new circumstances, Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati's love of teaching was suddenly transformed. He dedicated his life to both defending Islam and defining the outlines of a 'revived' Islam compatible with modern conditions and responsive to the demands of an ever more socially conscious youth. His task was difficult because the Islam he espoused was different from the traditional Islam upheld by the clergy. Mohammad-Taqi did not hide his sympathy for some of Ahmad Kasravi's criticisms of Shi'ism or for the Tudeh party's proclaimed positions on certain social issues. With Kasravi he argued that certain rituals and practices, which he saw as irrational and illogical, had nothing to do with real Shi'ism and had crept in to the faith during the Safavid period.⁵ And he approved of the Tudeh Party's concern for social justice, equality and their stand against exploitation, which he considered compatible with Islam, while rejecting its materialist philosophy.⁶ Yet despite these unorthodox tendencies Mohammad-Taqi received the informal blessing of the Grand Ayatollah Borujerdi for his work. During a meeting between the ayatollah and Mashhad's clergy, some of those present used the opportunity to impress on Mohammad-Taqi the importance of returning to their ranks; but upon hearing the latter's arguments for remaining a secular teacher Borujerdi is said to have accepted them and prayed for him.⁷

The inroads made by the Tudeh party in Mashhad's high schools distressed Mohammad-Taqi. During Qavam al-Saltaneh's premiership in 1945, the portfolio of minister of education was given to Fereidun Keshavarz, a member of the Tudeh. The possession of such a key post enabled the Tudeh to lure a number of high school teachers to its cause. According to Mohammad-Taqi, newly converted Tudeh teachers were given rapid promotion with appropriate salary increases, while no such benefits were accorded to the non-Tudeh teachers.⁸ Mohammad-Taqi recalled that about six or seven people who taught regularly at Mashhad's three main high schools became members of the Tudeh. Wary of the anti-religious propaganda that such teachers might spread among their pupils, he embarked on a personal crusade. Using the only weapon he possessed, he increased the time he spent teaching at these three schools to some twenty-two hours per week, taking no pay for twelve of them.⁹ In the three main courses he taught – Arabic, Persian literature and religious studies – he tried to revive the interest of his young audience in Islam. It was common knowledge that he knew around 105 sermons of the *Nahj al-balagha* – a compilation of Imam Ali's sermons, speeches and letters – by heart. One of his old students recalls that to be successful in his classes they had to learn Ali's sermon on *jihad* (holy war) by heart because through it Mohammad-Taqi tried to convey the urgency of the period in which they lived and to inculcate a

sense of responsibility and a consciousness of what should be done under such conditions.¹⁰ Convinced that his efforts were not sufficient to ward off attacks against Islam, in 1942 he wrote a book for fifth and sixth grade primary school students – *Osul-e Aqayed va Akhlaq-e Shari'ati* (Shari'ati's Principles of Belief and Ethics) – which aimed to familiarize children with the principles of the faith, while reconciling science with religion.

Mohammad-Taqi is even said to have debated with Tudeh and Kasravi sympathizers in streets and public places, thus earning himself the title of 'Khorasan's Socrates'. However, he knew that his Don Quixotic endeavours had their limitations, and so, responding to a suggestion made by some of his students, he organized regular meetings, during which he lectured one night a week. The lectures were held at the students' homes on a rotating basis until, in the winter of 1944, Taher Ahmadzadeh offered his house as a permanent meeting place. This move was very important in institutionalizing and popularizing an event which, though significant, remained limited in scope and appeal. Given the novelty and attraction of both the form and content of Mohammad-Taqi's meetings, the spacious rooms in Ahmadzadeh's centrally-situated house absorbed a growing, and increasingly regular, audience. In these sessions, Mohammad-Taqi, broke with past traditions. Instead of mourning the imams through a descriptive account of their death, the history of Imam Hossein's revolutionary movement and the texts of Imam Ali's sermons were presented and analysed. Instead of simply reciting Qur'anic verses, Mohammad-Taqi began the unprecedented practice of interpreting the divine text in public. Finally, the lectures and the debates that followed them were conducted by non-clerical figures. Mohammad-Taqi's lectures gradually became instrumental in preventing young Muslim students in search of novel and applicable responses to current socio-economic problems from joining the Tudeh party. His meetings were so successful that they even attracted the attention of Tudeh party members, who attended them and engaged in debate and discussion. Soon the party's newspaper in Khorasan started attacking Mohammad-Taqi's lectures and Taher Ahmadzadeh for his close involvement with them.¹¹

The Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths

The success of Mohammad-Taqi's lectures, and the promise of financial support from benefactors such as Asayesh, Motahedin, Amelizadeh, Hakimi, Qazi, Mahdavian and Ahmadzadeh, meant that he was eventually able to secure permanent headquarters for his lectures.¹² In 1947, 'The Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths' (Kanun-e Nashr-e Haqayeq-e Eslami) was officially opened in Mashhad's Chahar Bagh street.¹³ At this time Ali Shari'ati was fourteen years old. For a rent of 120 toman per month the Centre occupied the second floor which was composed of a large hall and two adjacent rooms.¹⁴ On special occasions, such as the night of Ashura, as many as 400 people frequented these rooms; at other

ship fee, but there was no rigid regulation limiting the attendance to those who had paid their dues. Since the Centre's only formal source of income was its membership dues, it was constantly faced with financial problems and subsequently accumulating debts, which resulted from its rent and the simple expense of serving tea at the meetings. Every time the Centre fell behind honouring its financial obligations, Mohammad-Taqi had to go around soliciting money from pious merchants and bazaaris who were not very forthcoming with their contributions for a religious cause which they pretended to believe in and support. Ali Shari'ati remembered such incidents with indignation and recalled the miserliness of the 'two bit' petty-bourgeoisie whose religion he called 'utter filth and dirt'. He thanked God that, having witnessed his father's experiences, he did not come to hate his religion and completely reject it because of those who pretended to be its pious practitioners.¹⁵ Nevertheless, as a result of Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati's incessant effort and sacrifice, after only three years, what had started as a small and unofficial circle became a well-established religious organization.

In its first publication, the Centre lamented the weakness, dispersion and decadence of contemporary Islam and pointed out that, endowed with the Qur'an which invited Muslims to science and reason, Islam could retrieve its grandeur and strength. The Christian colonial powers were accused of preventing Islamic countries from studying the Qur'an, the principles and teachings of which would have awakened and liberated them from their subjugation and bondage.¹⁶ After a lengthy self-criticism, the main causes of the predicament of contemporary Muslims was attributed to the absence of faith, ignorance of the Qur'an and the penetration of European values.¹⁷ The success of any reformist group in securing Iran's lost glory, dignity and welfare was said to hinge upon adherence to Qur'anic injunctions.¹⁸

The objectives of the Centre were stated as: proving the need for religion; proving that Islam was the only means of attaining felicity for mankind; proving the fallacy of what was practised in the name of Islam and awakening the people to its correct meaning and significance; promotion of national pride and religio-political honesty; advancement of national unity and compassion; proving the compatibility of Islam with modern science and civilization; teaching the Qur'an and its interpretation in an accessible manner; fending-off attacks and responding to criticisms against Islam with reference to scientific and rational sources; promoting Islamic values and practices; campaigning against the evils of ignorance, resignation, superstition, alcohol, gambling and prostitution; raising the consciousness of the people against atrocities committed by foreigners; enjoining the performance of national and religious practices and rituals (*sha'a'er mazhabi va melli*) in accordance with the directives of the Shari'a and reason; centralizing the intellectual, practical and financial forces of all dispersed religious groups working for the cause of Islam; familiarizing the people with the clerical institution (*rowhaniyat*) and encouraging people to respect those clerical figures truly worthy

of their title; finally, establishing religious associations where religious issues would be debated and founding libraries and publishing houses for the propagation of Islamic literature.¹⁹

The message, goals and everyday practices of the Centre contained the germs of certain new ideas and traits which could be considered reformist and modernist. The first of a twelve-item list of obligations of the Centre's members was that each person had to go beyond the traditionally held beliefs that were conveyed to them by their parents. Within their capacity, members were encouraged to engage in independent research to grasp the logic of religious tenets.²⁰ Firmly believing in the principles and obligatory practices of Shi'i Islam, the Centre sought to demystify and devulgarize Shi'ism as it existed and was practised. The demystification process was necessary to end the compartmentalization and separation of religion into 'this-worldly' and 'other-worldly' matters. The revitalization of Islam was possible if people were convinced that solutions to their temporal and secular problems could also be found in religion. The devulgarization process implied delinking certain commonly practised religious ceremonies from the ideal model of Shi'i Islam. Both demystification and devulgarization were long-term and necessary projects. The growing gap between the archaic rituals and highly esoteric concerns of the clergy on the one hand, and the pressing temporal problems of the people on the other, was essentially responsible for the increasing popularity of the Tudeh party and the Kasravists among young people, intellectuals and the small professional classes. The Centre viewed this chasm, the bridging of which was not easy, as the main challenge to Islam in the near future.

Based on irrefutable Islamic sources, those traditional religious perceptions and practices which bred lethargy, superstition and fatalism had to be gradually criticized. Such a task had to be carried out with subtlety and tact, avoiding any confrontation with the clergy, who still wielded the potent weapon of excommunication (*takfir*), which would have neutralized even the best of Islamic intentions, defeating the original purpose of revitalizing and thus saving Islam. Religion had to be transformed from a passive and regressive outlook, to an active catalyst, capable of identifying and solving present problems. The energy which was spent on mourning past misfortunes had to be channelled to redressing present predicaments.

The Centre could not have categorically dismissed the traditional Shi'i rites and rituals, which alienated the educated youth, yet to ordinary people were the essence of faith. Having called for the revival and propagation of Islam, it subjected such practices to the dictates of the Shari'a and reason. Clearly, the origin of certain rites and rituals could not be traced to the Qur'an. Without rejecting such practices, the Centre was, however, justified in not practising them. One can therefore argue that it tacitly accepted Kasravi's criticism of the futility and irreligiosity of certain religious rites and rituals. Its emphasis on the Qur'an and the *Nahj al-balagha* (The Way of Eloquence) as essential educational and religious texts, was also a novelty and an important signal. The Centre was not going to use the standard

compilations of the reported sayings and practices of the Imams as its educational texts. The return to the original sources, could not have gone unnoticed by the *rowhaniyat*, who in their interpretations and analysis heavily relied on such compilations by prominent Shi'ite jurists. In a way the Centre was by-passing the academic contribution of previous prominent Islamic jurists who constituted the pride and joy of the *rowhaniyat*. Instead of engaging in a debate on the validity and usefulness of the hadith, the Centre simply substituted it with the most irrefutable Shi'i sources, thus attaining its objective without provoking the *rowhaniyat*.

The Centre opened its doors to the public on three nights, each dedicated to a particular activity. On Thursday nights, the Qur'an was recited, then interpreted and discussed in Persian. Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati usually lectured on Imam Ali's *Nahj al-balagha* on Friday nights. On one other night, he coached a group of 17 to 18 young men to debate with the members of the Tudeh party.²¹ This group was composed of high school and college graduates. The members were selected by Mohammad-Taqi and were tutored in logic, philosophy and selected topics in communism. To understand and counter the arguments of the communists, Mohammad-Taqi was obliged to study their ideas and texts, a practice which was most unusual among established clerics of those days. At the time, the interpretation of the Qur'an and the discussion of the *Nahj al-balagha* was also an innovation. Furthermore, in his exegesis of the Qur'an, Mohammad-Taqi used well known Shi'i and Sunni sources. The inclusion of Sunni sources was most uncommon and caused considerable commotion among the Shi'i clergy of Mashhad.²² The traditional *ulema* generally believed that the Qur'an was not there for the purpose of interpretation and discussion, but for prostration. Ordinary people were considered as only capable of reciting the Qur'an, not reflecting upon it. Traditional religious gatherings were essentially mourning sessions in which episodes of the lives of Imams were narrated by a member of the clergy or a preacher, stirring sorrow and sympathy for the worldly sufferings they experienced as a price for their eternal bliss in the hereafter. The common practice of *rowzeh khani*, which was more nostalgic and sentimental than intellectual, was absent at the Centre. And, whereas traditional religious gatherings were always addressed by a cleric, in the Centre the propagation of Islam was carried out by the Western-clad laymen.

Even though the Centre's mainstream activities were essentially educational, the issues addressed had considerable socio-political and economic overtones and implications. As a result of the debates and discussions that ensued, certain supporters of the Centre gradually stopped frequenting it. Taher Ahmadzadeh recalls that discussions of Islam's position on social, political and especially economic issues alarmed the socially privileged friends of the Centre.²³ The notion of the inseparability of religion from politics and certain economic implications of the ideal Islamic system were instrumental in chasing away the landowners, merchants and local capitalists.²⁴ The key figures and coordinators of the Centre, however, remained united. What had started as an Islamic movement to combine concern

for piety and salvation in the hereafter with an interest in temporal life was reaching the most difficult stage of deciding which social, political and economic system to adopt as that most compatible with its vision of Islam.

The Centre wished to avoid confrontation with the traditional clergy. Such a task proved difficult given its principles and objectives. First, Mohammad-Taqi could not modernize Islam and thus render it attractive, without tampering with certain well established practices, which had become very dear to the clergy. Second, Mohammad-Taqi's tight rope act became ever more tenuous as the growing numbers of young members of the Centre pressed for more radical political and economic interpretations. Mohammad-Taqi was an amphibious creature. Even though he had shed his clerical garb and sought to present a rational and modern religious discourse, he had empathy for and a certain affinity with the clergy. He was both an insider and a reformist. He thus understood their preoccupations, sensitivities and weaknesses and did not wish to antagonize them and thus jeopardize the effectiveness of the Centre.

In his lectures on Imam Hossein, for example, Mohammad-Taqi emphasized the social significance of his revolutionary movement against Mo'awiya instead of simply moving his audience to tears by a vivid description of the bloody battle. He recalls that some of the clergy in Mashhad criticized, and even publicly denounced, what seemed to be the Centre's lack of respect towards the ritual of inflicting wounds on the head and weeping for the martyrdom of Imam Hossein.²⁵ Instead of rejecting the old custom, Mohammad-Taqi side-stepped the issue by arguing that the clergy's traditional practice was aimed at arousing a sense of grief and sorrow, while he sought to identify and analyse Imam Hossein's movement; the two approaches, he would add, should not be confused.²⁶ However, the young members of the Centre, who might have substituted the Tudeh party or Kasravism for traditional Islam had it not been for the Centre's reformist Islam saw no reason why a pragmatic and thus cordial relation with the clergy was necessary. They believed that what they considered to be the fundamental social principles of the Qur'an and *Nahj al-balagha* were not for compromise.

The real popular impact of the Centre, even at the regional level of Mashhad, can be better understood in terms of the number of people it attracted as its effective audience. Between 1944 and 1950 it could at best claim an audience of approximately fifty regulars at each of its gatherings, most of whom were young intellectuals and professionals. This figure has to be compared with the multitudes who regularly attended traditional religious ceremonies at Mashhad's mosques. A year after the Centre's opening, Hajji Abedzadeh, a glass merchant, built an impressive and spacious building on a 2000-square metre site dedicated to the observation of traditional religious ceremonies and the provision of religious education at different levels. This building was not a mosque. It was called the Mahdiyeh or the abode of the 12th Imam. On the nights when the Mahdiyeh had its regular religious programmes, at which a member of the clergy or a preacher delivered a sermon, it bustled with up to 500 people. On special religious occasions,

such as the night of Ashura, as many as 2000 attended it. The Mahdiyeh, according to some, was constructed to compete with the Centre,²⁷ and in later years, Ali Shari'ati argued that its success was due to the fact that it was supported by the generosity of the masses. By contrast, the Centre's tight budget and limited facilities, he maintained, reflected the miserly character of its petty-bourgeois patrons.²⁸

The Centre and the Oil Nationalization Movement

From 1950, the Centre entered its second phase. The oil nationalization movement forced it to get involved in national politics. From the outset, the alliance between Mohammad Mosaddeq and Ayatollah Kashani in support of nationalizing Iran's oil industry and against British colonialism, embodied the Centre's aspirations. As politically-conscious Muslims, this was a long awaited-for opportunity to blend Islam and politics in order to secure the welfare of the nation and inflict a blow upon a colonial power.

During the early days of the nationalization movement, Ayatollah Kashani is said to have been very unpopular among the majority of Khorasan's high ranking clergy, who even argued that he was not qualified to be called an ayatollah.²⁹ The Centre, however, supported Kashani's anti-colonial and initially pro-Mosaddeq position. When he visited Mashhad in 1950, its most prominent members went to pay their respects to him, and he was subsequently invited to the Centre, where he attended a speech by Mohammad-Taqi.

The focus of the Centre gradually altered from relatively limited educational activities to public political meetings, rallies and demonstrations in favour of the nationalization movement. Between 1951 and 1953, its meetings attracted large crowds of up to 500 people inside its headquarters. It is reported that, in addition, up to 200 people gathered in the adjacent streets listening to loudspeakers.³⁰ In the absence of Mohammad-Taqi, it was usually Taher Ahmadzadeh, and sometimes Ali Shari'ati, who addressed the crowds.

The radicalization of the socio-political environment led to the emergence of a radical Islamic discourse within the Centre. The leading proponent of this important current was Taher Ahmadzadeh, commonly known as Agha Taher among his friends and disciples. Ahmadzadeh belonged to a wealthy land-owning family, whose forefathers, prominent Shi'i figures in Harat, had migrated from Afghanistan to Mashhad. He had a profound understanding of the socio-political issues of his time and was instrumental in politicizing the issues which Mohammad-Taqi raised in his interpretations of Islam.³¹ In the room adjacent to the main hall, Ahmadzadeh deconstructed Mohammad-Taqi's lectures. He decoded his metaphors, identified and actualized the symbolic personalities of Islam and derived from them socio-political implications and lessons.³² Historical figures such as Imam Ali, Imam Hossein and Abu-Zarr on the one hand, and Osman and Mo'awiya on the other, were placed in a modern and understandable social context

at the hands of Ahmadzadeh. Arguing that if Ali, Hossein or Abu-Zarr were alive today, they would have opposed social injustice and tyranny; Ahmadzadeh concluded that it was incumbent upon their true followers to do the same. The royal family, and the ruling classes, were presented as the modern equivalents of Osman and Mo'awiya. According to Ahmadzadeh, discussing the *Nahj al-balagha* lent itself to the analysis of modern socio-political issues such as social justice, exploitation, independence, freedom, equality and fraternity from an Islamic perspective.³³ The influence of Tudeh political literature and culture made the use of class analysis and class struggle an easy and effective tool. The Centre was, therefore, educating a generation of anti-monarchical young radical intellectuals steeped in a politically-conscious Islam. The monopoly of the Tudeh party over the socio-political and economic aspects of socialism was implicitly challenged by the Centre's radical current.

Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati's skilful oratory along with the energy of the Centre's young supporters became an important pro-oil nationalization force in Mashhad. The politicized mood of the country transformed the cautious reformer into a militant. After the premiership of Mosaddeq, for example, Mohammad-Taqi led a huge crowd which dismantled the name of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company from the building it occupied on Tabrasi street in Mashhad, replacing it with the name, 'National Iranian Oil Company'. After this symbolic act, Mohammad-Taqi delivered a moving speech.³⁴ During the interim premiership of Qavam al-Saltaneh in 1952, Mohammad-Taqi and the Centre played an important role in mobilizing the people against Qavam and in favour of Mosaddeq. A national general strike was planned for 21 July 1952, demanding the departure of Qavam and the return of Mosaddeq. It is said that, in Mashhad, the strike was announced by Mohammad-Taqi at a rally organized by the Centre on 18 July.³⁵

In January 1952, during the 17th national parliamentary elections, Mashhad witnessed an interesting alignment of political forces jockeying for the city's four seats. The Islamic associations of the city joined forces under the title of Jam'iyat-e Mo'talefeh-e Eslami and agreed to put up two common candidates. It was subsequently decided that these candidates would be chosen by the direct vote of the rank and file members of the associations. The election results placed Mohammad-Taqi at the top of the list followed by Sheikh Mahmud Halabi, a prominent cleric who regularly preached at the famous Gowharshad mosque, but had never been previously involved with politics.³⁶ Mohammad-Taqi's active political role in the nationalization movement had made him popular among a broadly-based Islamic constituency, proving that his support-base had outgrown its traditional intellectual limits. The Iran Party, which was a member of Mosaddeq's National Front, supported Hamid Musavian. The Mosaddeq Club, an association with very strong ties with Kashani and Baqa'i supported the candidacy of Sadeq Behdad. The wealthy and politically influential landlords supported their own three candidates, Qodsi-Tinat, Moshar-e Qa'em-Maqam and Qoreishi. The candidates of the Islamic associations were wooed by both the Mosaddequist groups and the

landowners to form a coalition. It is said that Kashani wrote a letter to Mohammad-Taqi instructing him to accept and support a tactical coalition with the landowners so that each group would be able to send two candidates to parliament.³⁷ Mahmud Halabi, whose sympathies were far stronger for Kashani than Mosaddeq or the oil nationalization movement, actively supported Kashani's idea of a coalition with the wealthy landowners.³⁸ The Mosaddeqist groups proposed a common ticket with the two members of the Islamic associations. Mohammad-Taqi is said to have rejected both proposals.³⁹

However, after a day of peaceful elections in Mashhad, during which no significant irregularity was reported, the polling was stopped and the elections discontinued. Mashhad's seemingly favourite candidate was denied a place in the 'Peoples' Home' in Tehran. According to a member of The Organization for the Supervision of Free Elections present at the voting, the two candidates of the Islamic organizations and two candidates of the wealthy landowners seem to have had the greatest chance of victory.⁴⁰ The facts seem to support Cottam's opinion that, anxious about the prospects of a victory by supporters of Kashani in Mashhad, Shiraz and Isfahan and the subsequent control of the Majles by his faction, Mosaddeq's government had, despite its promise of a free election, intervened to discontinue the proceedings.⁴¹ If this is true, one must doubt the extent to which the government was informed about Mohammad-Taqi's devotion to Mosaddeq's cause and principles. It must have been assumed, erroneously, that given the Centre's reputation as a religious institution and its friendly attitude towards Kashani, it would support Kashani on any and all political issues. Few people knew that Mohammad-Taqi had already turned down Kashani's advice on a coalition with the landowners. Very soon, Mohammad-Taqi was to prove once more that his support was given not for the clothes a person wore or the profession they belonged to, but for the principles they stood for and their position on the welfare of the Iranian people.

In January 1953, Mosaddeq requested parliament to extend the emergency executive rights that had been given to him six months earlier. These rights enabled him to effectively combine executive and legislative forces in his own hands thus speeding up the process of legislation and implementation. Kashani, who had become the president of the Majles opposed the request. He wrote a letter to the Majles stating that as long as he remained president of that body, he would not allow debates over such motions, which were in his opinion unconstitutional.⁴² The growing dispute between Mosaddeq and Kashani thus became public. Despite the Centre's Islamic ideology, and its past support for Kashani, it endorsed Mosaddeq. Its position reflected its priorities and concerns. The Centre judged the politics of Mosaddeq, the layman, to be more in line with its own conception of the objectives and modalities of a nationalist and religious movement than those of Kashani, the religious authority. Members of the Centre flooded the Majles with telegrams supporting the extension of Mosaddeq's emergency rights.⁴³

After the 1953 American-staged coup against the nationalist government of

Mosaddeq, the Centre entered its third phase. During this period its activities and concerns became so intertwined with the clandestine and loosely organized National Resistance Movement (NRM) that the identification of its independent character and positions becomes extremely difficult. On 29 August 1953, only ten days after the coup, the National Resistance Movement made its first official appearance by clandestinely printing and distributing 2000 copies of a circular (*elamieh*) in Tehran entitled 'The Movement Continues'.⁴⁴ In this circular the NRM presented its principle guidelines, which were in essence the continuation of Mosaddeq's policies. Its founders were prominent politicians or organizational and party leaders who had remained faithful to Mosaddeq's principles and policies until his overthrow. The presence of figures such as Reza Zanjani, Zia al-Din Hajj-Sayyed-Javadi, Jallali Musavi, Taleqani and Gharavi proved that Mosaddeq's movement continued to have the support of what had come to be known as the 'progressive clerics'.

Founders and old associates of the Centre such as Mohammad-Taqi, Taher Ahmadzadeh, Asayesh and Amelizadeh joined the NRM and founded the Mashhad chapter, which was among the most active provincial branches. At the same time, since the League for the Freedom of the Iranian People was one of the founding political organizations of the NRM, its young members in Mashhad, who still retained their close ties with the Centre, also joined. The Centre thus became a physical umbrella or front for the activities of the Mashhad branch of the NRM, the members of which were its old adherents.

The fact that the Centre was known as a religious organization, albeit a Mosaddeqist one, guaranteed its survival. Its Mosaddeqist tendency did not in itself bother the new government, a good number of the allies and supporters of which had also been, at one time or another, Mosaddeq's supporters. Even though the Centre's activities were once again confined to its Thursday and Friday night sessions, it became the hub of pro-Mosaddeqist activities in Mashhad. Young and old Mosaddeqists gathered there to exchange ideas, news, clandestine leaflets and pamphlets. All secret meetings and appointments were arranged at the Centre and all speeches were thinly veiled symbolic attacks on the coup-propped government.⁴⁵ Allusions to the Islamic movement and the lessons that ought to be drawn from it were essentially a guise for the analysis of the nationalist movement. Concepts such as freedom, justice and independence often constituted the central theme and subject of the speeches.

In the summer of 1957, the NRM clandestinely published and circulated a 24-page pamphlet called 'Oil', in which it analysed and criticized the consequences of Iran's agreement with the Western oil consortiums after the fall of Mosaddeq.⁴⁶ The publication of this pamphlet led to a massive clean-up operation by the security forces. Members and supporters of NRM were rounded up in Tehran. In Mashhad 16 people were arrested during the night and flown to Tehran in a military plane on the following day.⁴⁷ All those arrested were adherents of the Centre including Mohammad-Taqi, Taher Ahmadzadeh, Asayesh, Taherzadeh, Amelizadeh

and the twenty-four-year-old Ali Shari'ati.

Concurrent with the arrest and imprisonment of the founders and active partisans of the Centre, its original locale in Chahar Bagh street was closed down. After his release from prison, Mohammad-Taqi was invited by the Grand Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad-Hadi Milani to hold his lectures and exegesis sessions at his house. In 1960, the Centre was again allowed to operate, but only as a religious-cultural organization for the propagation of Islam. This fourth and last phase came to an end in June 1963, when the Centre was eventually closed.

The Influence of the Centre

In evaluating the role of the Centre during its less than twenty years of life, one could attempt to examine the degree to which it had succeeded in attaining the objectives that it set out in its first publication in 1947. Given that these goals contained general, abstract and ideal maxims, a realistic and practical assessment becomes difficult if not impossible. Changing socio-political circumstances, clearly modified and at times altered the Centre's immediate priorities and concerns. In an historical perspective, however, the Centre's most significant impact was through its provision of a non-conventional religious education and an ethical political consciousness, based on certain religious tenets, to a generation which, despite its upbringing and inclinations, failed to see the relevance of traditional Islam to modern social and individual problems.

The Centre offered the possibility of looking at Islam not as a set of mechanical rites, rituals and practices based on centuries-old customs and traditions that may have been distorted, but as a living entity capable of providing pertinent modern responses based on an ethical and humane set of universal values. It sought to prove that Islam's universal values were perfectly compatible with human rationality and therefore in harmony with modern times. Whereas the traditional clergy did not see the rise of the Tudeh party or the Kasravi tendency as a possible reflection of the crisis or bankruptcy of their old ways, the Centre, having identified the crisis as an inadequacy of the traditional Islamic discourse and tools, set out to reform them. The fact that it was extremely careful not to antagonize the traditional clergy served its purpose but set definite constraints on the extent to which it could modernize Islam. In the final analysis, it constituted a safety net which prevented the free fall of Islam into oblivion among young Muslims.

Politically, the Centre propagated a concept of clean, ethical and open politics. To disseminate its message, it relied on dialogue and based its arguments in support of the validity or relevance of Islamic concepts on reason and divine sources. Its loosely defined political aspirations were based on a belief in social justice, anti-colonialism and anti-despotism. Even though such concepts were shared by a great number of Iranian intellectuals and professionals, very few derived them from religion. The Centre succeeded in creating a group of young men with

modern and, for their own epoch, progressive socio-political ideas steeped in Islam. Later in their lives, some of its regulars abandoned politics. Others, such as Amir-Parviz Puyan and Mas'ud Ahmadzadeh, remained devout Muslims until 1964, then embraced Marxism-Leninism and became leading figures of the revolutionary left. Many, however, remained steadfast in their politicized Islamic beliefs and became instrumental in creating Islamic political circles, groups and organizations wherever they went.

As the Iranian society of the post-Mosaddeq era developed, at each stage of the struggle for social justice, anti-imperialism and anti-despotism, an important Islamic contingent was present and active. Two fundamental sources of this novel type of modern Islamic militancy were the Centre in Mashhad and the Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists (MGWS) in Tehran and Mashhad. Ali Shari'ati was exposed to and participated in the activities of both these currents. An exposition and analysis of his life and thought would be impossible without an understanding of the MGWS and its profound impact on him.

The Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists

'The socio-economic order of Islam is scientific socialism based on the worship of God'

Reza Shah's abdication unleashed the dammed up energy of Iran's intellectuals and professionals. Since the old shah had taken power the world had experienced events and changes of immense importance; but during his tight reign open analysis of these developments and their implications for Iran and Iranians was not easy. This was also the period of the allied invasion. Irrespective of the ideals they fought for, the British and Americans represented a foreign occupying force. Against the background of the hardship, poverty and deprivation suffered by the great majority of Iranians – a predicament aggravated by the war – their presence created a stark contrast which provoked rage and fury. The relatively conspicuous life-style of the soldiers, their moral laxity and their self-righteous, victorious attitude simply added insult to injury. This, together with the general sympathy that many urban Iranians felt for Germany during the war, meant that the occupation created an unprecedented sense of nationalism and concern for what should be done to free the country from foreign influence.

This was a period of national soul searching and reflection for educated urban social groups, particularly the young. At the oldest secular school in Tehran, the Dar al-Fonun, a small group of concerned and nationalist students gradually gathered around Mohammad Mekanik, a charismatic figure who would soon change his name to Mohammad Nakhshab. The group was made up of young men of around eighteen who were in their final years of high school. They came mostly from religiously-oriented families who had considerable social status, but were not necessarily well-off; some were the children of notable clerical figures.¹ In the words of one of them, 'we got together to talk about the problems of the country to discuss what had happened to it and to reflect on what could be done about it.'² Affected by years of repression, the first meetings of this small group were organized in secret on the outskirts of Tehran at the foot of the Toqrol tower at Shah Abdolazim. Later, they met openly on Thursday nights, usually at the home of Ayatollahzadeh Ha'eri whose three sons were members of the group. The main topics of discussion at their meetings were politics, social conditions and the fate

of the country. Soon a handwritten carbon-copied newspaper, *Ruznameh-e Ma* was produced by the group and circulated among them. Under the influence of Nakhshab, they came to the conclusion that a strong and disciplined organizational structure in the form of a political party was necessary to mobilize the people and redress the problems of Iran. But the party needed a political discourse and its broad contours needed to be sketched.

After Reza Shah's abdication, Iran's political prisoners were released. Among them were members of the famous 'Group of Fifty Three' (Panjah-o Seh Nafar) who had been imprisoned for spreading communism and attempting to destabilize the regime. Under the influence of one of the 'Fifty Three', Fazlollah Garakani, who was known as a man of principle, and who had withdrawn from all political activities after his release from prison, Nasir Asar, a member of the original circle around Nakhshab at Dar al-Fonun, became familiar with Marxian concepts such as the proletariat, class struggle, surplus value and exploitation. Asar recalls that once, while he was discussing his newly found ideas at home, explaining how the proletariat of the world would unite, liberate the oppressed and inherit the world, his father Seyyed Kazem Asar, an eminent *alem* and academic, reminded him that the Qur'an had heralded such an event thirteen centuries ago. Seyyed Kazem then recited the fourth and fifth verse of *al-Qasas*, in which God promises the disinherited, whom the Pharaoh had persecuted, the leadership and inheritance of the world. At a regular meeting with members of the Nakhshab circle, Asar reported on what his father had said and pointed out to the relationship between concepts of social justice and equity elaborated by Qur'an and those very same notions developed by Marx. Nakhshab, he says, immediately grasped the significance of this association and from then on sought to develop a 'humanistic Islamic Socialism' on the basis of the Qur'an, and the lives of the Prophet, Imam Ali and Imam Hossein.³

Parallel to the activities of Nakhshab's circle, another group, composed of about twenty-five high school students, was formed around Jaleddin Ashtiyani who studied at the Faculty of Engineering of Tehran University. Since the members of the Nakhshab group had by now gone on to university, Ashtiyani's group came to be known as the 'high school group' and Nakhshab's as the 'university group'. By 1943, the two groups, aware of each others' mutual interests and concerns, merged under the leadership of Nakhshab. They shared three basic convictions: a commitment to social justice and equality or what they believed to be its modern synonym, socialism; strong religious sentiments, and a deeply felt sense of nationalism.⁴ This organization became known as the League of Patriotic Muslims (Jam'iyat-e Moslemin-e Vatankeh).

By 1944, the League had grown into a clandestine organization of about seventy. At first it called itself the 'World Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists' (Nehzat-e Jahani-ye Khoda Parastan-e Sosialist). A year later, in 1945, it dropped the claim that it was a world movement and adopted the name 'Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists'. It maintained that Islam was an internationalist idea,

capable of providing solutions for all oppressed peoples. The ideology of the Movement was based on socialism as an economic system which upheld social justice and monotheism as its philosophical foundation. Socialism based on the absence of private ownership of the means of production was believed to be the quickest way to eradicate exploitation, poverty and the deprivation of the masses. The attainment of these objectives was also believed to be the essence of justice in Islam.⁵ The Movement thus incorporated socialism as a concept inherent in Islam and *ipso facto* not antagonistic with the Iranian social psyche and culture. It justified this blend by arguing that it was the materialists whose theory was flawed: materialism and socialism were incompatible since the establishment of a just socialist system required individual sacrifice and altruism which was in contradiction with the logic of materialism. The heroic and sacrificial acts required to attain an ideal world had to be based on a firm conviction or faith in something other than this material world; otherwise why risk one's existence for an ideal? The Movement accused Marxists of 'being materialist in their thought and idealist in their ethics.'⁶ It was thus argued that a natural and organic relation existed between faith in God and the struggle for socialism and social justice.⁷ These ideas, elaborated in Mohammad Nakhshab's BA thesis on 'Law and Ethics' gradually found their way in to the Movement's ideology.

The Movement's concern for righteousness led it to draft a rather rigid code of conduct for aspiring members. Individuals were only admitted to official meetings after a long trial period of between three months to two years. During this period they had to prove their moral and ethical rigour by demonstrating their allegiance to the Movements' code of conduct, which included both private and social axioms: being honest, trustworthy and truthful in practice, open to self-criticism when it was necessary and ready to give priority to social over private concerns. They were expected to fulfill their obligatory religious practices, while combating all superstitious and polytheistic activities. Individual righteousness and moral discipline was expected of all members. The consumption of alcohol and smoking was forbidden. Candidates, however, participated in the social activities organized by regular members such as weekly picnics, mountain climbing and congregational prayers.

Members of the MGWS were encouraged to study, acquire greater knowledge and widen their intellectual horizons. Its major concern, however, was to dispel the ideological inferiority complex which non-Marxists felt before the well-articulated communist world outlook. The Tudeh party had astutely established a mythical, yet popularly held notion, that it had a monopoly over scientific infallibility and social righteousness. If the MGWS was to attract supporters, it had to develop a discourse which would undermine the Tudeh's contentions, hence providing its members with an identity and a sense of superiority. Due to immediate and pressing political issues and decisions, however, theoretical and ideological clarifications and explanations took a back seat to the tactical issues which confronted the Movement.

During the elections of the 15th Majles the MGWS decided to enter the political arena. While it remained clandestine, its members actively participated in the election campaigns of those candidates who later constituted the minority in the parliament and subsequently the nucleus of Mosaddeq's movement. The success of its militants in mobilizing the people and organizing political rallies gradually gave rise to the idea that perhaps the time had come for it to become public. Its *de facto* alliance with Mosaddeqist forces had given rise to regular contacts between its leadership and that of different Mosaddeqist tendencies. An open organizational alliance with certain of these forces seemed to be the logical future step. The tactical choice between remaining clandestine and continuing to recruit cadres, or entering the phase of open political struggle became a highly controversial issue.⁸ Those in favour of remaining clandestine believed that before any political action, people had to be prepared through the gradual propagation of the Movement's ideology. This group, led by Jalaleddin Ashtiyani, believed that its primary objective was to educate cadres without getting dragged into daily political disputes.⁹ The other school of thought held that the time was ripe for immediate political activism in the form of parliamentary struggle. This latter group, led by Nakhshab, believed that the task of imparting social consciousness was more effective, and a far larger audience could be reached, through open political channels. Nakhshab's group was in favour of creating a national party based on organizational alliances with respectable figures and tendencies within the National movement. By this time a number of the original members of the Movement had left. Some had abandoned political activities, others had joined the youth branch of the Tudeh, and at least one had shed his Islamic beliefs and embraced Marxism without joining the Party.

The Split

In September 1947, the General Assembly of the MGWS was convened at Seyyed Mehdi Razavi's spacious home in the Pamenar quarter of Tehran. The question before the members was whether or not the Movement should enter a new phase of public political organization. The majority of the assembly voted in favour of the motion;¹⁰ but according to Ebrahim Yazdi, the Central Council voted against it. Nakhshab, who was himself a member of the Council, apparently refused to accept their decision and the Council consequently relieved him of his duties for a certain period.¹¹ The MGWS, which had originated from a fusion of two groups, was thus once more divided into two separate associations. Despite their differences, however, members of the two groups continued to collaborate intellectually and maintain friendly relations. Jalaleddin Ashtiyani, Abolqasem Zarinkhameh, Ahmad Bidari, Kamuneh and Kazem Yazdi constituted the core of the group which had voted to remain clandestine and they were joined months later by Isma'il and Ebrahim Yazdi. However, the activities of this group gradually petered out as

individual members became engaged in other ventures, some joining the Islamic Association of Students, which had gathered strength at the University of Tehran. The second group rented a place on Rey street in Tehran and launched its public activities. Its leadership consisted of Mohammad-Nakhshab, Hossein Razi, Mo'ineddin Marja'i, Mostafavi, Lajevardi and Ali Shari'atmadari.

The Nakhshab group remained politically active and in February 1948 changed its official name to the Organization for National Cooperation (Sazeman-e Ta'avon-e Melli). Pursuing its original idea of creating a viable and all-encompassing political organization it approached a number of Mosaddeqist leaders and organizations and, while still conducting its daily activities, negotiated the terms of a political merger. On 21 May 1951 it signed a coalition agreement with the Mosaddeqist Iran Party and accepted its name. The Iran Party, which included a number of prominent politicians, had become top-heavy and had gradually lost its vitality. Its critics, and even some of its friends, called it '*hezb-e kar gosha*' or the 'employment agency party'. It was alleged that careerists and opportunists joined the party not for a cause or an ideal, but to assure themselves of secure jobs. The reputation of the Iran Party was based on the prestige and popularity of a few nationally renowned politicians such as Sanjabi, Alahyar Saleh, Hasibi and Shahpur Bakhtiar. The young, idealist and energetic members of the Nakhshab group were viewed by party leaders as a timely and necessary injection of keen new blood. Under the umbrella of the party, the Nakhshab group focused on the establishment and organization of three major branches in Shiraz, Bandar-Pahlavi and Mashhad. By early 1952, when the Fourth Congress of the party was convened, it was not surprising that members of the group came to occupy relatively important positions within its bureaucracy. Hossein Razi was elected to the seven-man Central Committee, Nakhshab to the High Council, Mo'ineddin Marja'i along with Ali Akbar Nushin and Ahmad Sami'i to the Provincial Committee of Tehran, and Mohammad Jabaruti and Kashefi to the party's Youth Organization. The Provincial Committees of Shiraz, Bandar Pahlavi and Mashhad also came under the control of Nakhshab's supporters.¹² The Nakhshab group believed their progress showed that the majority at the 4th Congress of the party accepted the view that political success was contingent upon an Islamic ideology plus socialism organized under the leadership of a group of nationally respected politicians with proven integrity.¹³ Future events proved that the Iran Party leaders did not take Nakhshab's ideology seriously.

Gradually, a group of secular political figures formed a loose faction against the Nakhshab's group. Shahpur Bakhtiar and Zirakzadeh, backed by the Rasht Provincial Committee, argued that the group had infiltrated the party and acted as Kashani's fifth column. A tug of war between Islamic and secular tendencies ensued and reached its climax during the election of representatives to the party's 5th Congress in Tehran. The fact that Bakhtiar was not elected to the Congress while five of the most prominent leaders of the Nakhshab group were easily elected was construed as a victory for them and their ideology.

The incident, which led to open confrontation within the party and the secession of the Nakhshab group, occurred after the elections and during the first meeting of the newly-elected Central Committee. Hossein Razi, who was handed an envelope before he entered the meeting, left it unopened on the conference table and absented himself for a few moments. On his return he realized that Zirakzadeh had 'mistakenly' opened the letter and read it to the Central Committee. Signed by Sami'i and Marja'i, two important members of the Nakhshab group, the letter vehemently criticized Nakhshab, Razi and Nushin for their alleged neglect of the group's Islamic and socialist objectives and their opportunistic collaboration and association with the Iran Party leadership. Even though it clearly reflected a schism within the Nakhshab group, the majority of the party's leadership seem to have felt that the time had come to discipline and contain the group's power. According to Razi, the central committee voted to expel Nakhshab and Sami'i, both elected representatives of the rank and file. Their choice was odd since Nakhshab had been accused of collaboration with the party leadership by Sami'i. The fact that one of the accused and one of the accusers was expelled might demonstrate that this was an act of political vengeance. Even though the party's tribunal voted against the expulsion, the leadership insisted on its decision. According to Razi, the Nakhshab group decided to secede in order to minimize the damage to Mosaddeq's National Front, which at this time was under attack by Kashani and Baqa'i.

On 16 February 1953, the Nakhshab group split from the Iran Party and called itself the League for the Freedom of the Iranian People (Jam'iyat-e Azadi-ye Mardom-e Iran). Its newspaper, *Mardom-e Iran* (The Iranian People) announced the expulsion of five representatives to the 5th Congress including Nakhshab, Razi, Nushin, Marja'i and Sami'i, on the charges of agitation for a revision of party ideology.¹⁴ They were said to have been preparing the rank and file for the adoption of socialism on the basis of Islam as the party's official ideology.¹⁵ The new party is said to have had approximately 1,000 members in Tehran and 500 in the three provincial towns of Shiraz, Bandar-Pahlavi and Mashhad. *Mardom-e Iran*, appeared three times a week and was financed by a monthly contribution of 8 toman from those few members who had steady jobs.¹⁶ After the coup, the organization was renamed the Iranian People's Party (Hezb-e Mardom-e Iran).

The Iranian People's Party was instrumental in conceiving and organizing the Mosaddeqist National Resistance Movement. It later became a member of the 'second' and subsequently the 'third' National Front. In 1964, a number of its radical members under the leadership of Kazem Sami and Habibollah Peiman, who had come to believe in armed resistance, issued three circulars expressing their views and effectively seceded from the party, forming JAMA or Jonbesh-e Azadibakhsh-e Mardom-e Iran (The Liberation Movement of the Iranian People). In the summer of 1965, members of JAMA were arrested. Soon afterwards the leaders of the Iranian People's Party were arrested. The activities of the party, however, continued in the form of small, clandestine circles of trusted friends and acquaintances.

To understand the appeal of the God-Worshipping Socialists to educated young people, one has to understand its political programme and platform. Its choice of name was in itself an indication of the type of people it wished to attract. The God-Worshipping Socialists presented a revolutionary socio-political programme rooted in Islamic culture. This was both familiar and accessible to those young men and women who wished for radical social change without wanting to embrace the tools and perception of the 'foreigner', whose intentions remained suspect. The modernist discourse of the God-Worshipping Socialists further removed the stigma of ritualism, superstition, quietism, retrogression and parochialism they believed to be characteristic of traditional Islam. It is therefore not surprising that in one of its daily reports in 1946, the Persian programme of Radio Moscow derided its new rivals as 'utopian socialists' doomed to failure.¹⁷

The socio-political discourse of the MGWS can be deduced from its constitution.¹⁸ Article 1 stipulated that members must believe in God and share a common social ideal, namely socialism. Article 3, affirmed that God-Worshipping Socialists were defenders of the real rights of the workers, peasants and toilers and the real foe of any type of dictatorship, exploitation and colonialism. Article 5 stressed that meaningful reforms would have to start with improvements in individual ethics and perceptions. Politically, the MGWS called for the defence of Iran's national sovereignty and independence (Article 8), a struggle against anti-democratic laws (Article 9) and support for all anti-colonialist movements (Article 10). Economically, it maintained that all able-bodied individuals were entitled to a job and should be rewarded according to the 'value of their labour' (Article 12); all illicitly gained wealth was to be expropriated for the welfare of workers, peasants and other toilers (Article 13); all natural resources, including mines, were to be nationalized (Article 15); land was to be given to the peasants and agricultural activity to be regulated according to a socialist plan (Article 17); public ownership was to be expanded and the nationalization of heavy industries was to be given priority (Article 19), finally it was incumbent upon society to impose its supervision on production and distribution in order to assure the provision of basic needs to all people (Article 20). On moral issues, the MGWS stipulated that the consumption of alcohol and opium and practices such as bribery and prostitution which weakened and threatened the social fabric had to be prohibited (Article 23). They also pledged to oppose both materialistic and superstitious ideas (Article 24). The inclusion of this article was intended to demonstrate their theoretical opposition to the Tudeh as well as the traditional clerically-led Islamic formations. Finally, the MGWS called for the provision and respect of women's rights in order to create a more solid new generation (Article 25).

The God-Worshipping Socialists sought to identify themselves as the pioneers of a new and independent strand of thought, not only superior to both Western ideologies of capitalism and communism, but also transcending the institutional

Islam of the clergy. This world-outlook was set out in a few key articles which, however, were particular in two ways. First, they were written by those who had at some point been active members of the MGWS, retained its core convictions, yet had ceased to participate actively in either of its two branches after the split. Second, they were not published in the official publications of the Movement, but in two journals – *Nameh-e Forugh-e Elm* and *Ganj-e Shayegan* – which at the time constituted a platform for all modernist Muslim intellectuals.

In an article entitled 'Forward with the Qur'an', published in 1950, Abolqasem Shakibnia, a key figure of the Movement since its inception, encapsulated the arguments, logic and theoretical position of the God-Worshipping Socialists.¹⁹ He argued that the people of his time and epoch were ignorant of the true message of Islam, which had been presented by the Prophet some 1370 years ago. Muslims had failed to fulfill their essential task of explaining the purpose and object of Islam based on the logic of changing times. This defect, he argued, had led to a grave misconception. Religion had become shrouded in a veil of superstition and obscurantism and transformed into a set of rigid rules and a handful of rituals and rites.²⁰ Shakibnia lamented the way the clergy had sought to counter the spread of materialist ideas, which in his opinion had actually played into the hands of those who wished to castigate religion. He posited that Islam possessed a complete social system, thus rejecting those arguments that attempted to divide religion from socio-political activities. He argued that more than 1200 years before Marx, the Prophet of Islam instituted 'scientific socialism' in the underdeveloped society of Arabia. Shakibnia concluded that, 'Islam is a median school (*maktab-e vaseteh*) situated philosophically between the two schools of idealism and materialism and economically between the two systems of capitalism and communism. In other words, Islam is a moderate socialism, 'philosophically based on God-worshipping'.²¹

Two years later, in the first issue of *Ganj-e Shayegan*, the theme of Islam as a 'median school' was elaborated by Shakibnia and applied to the field of foreign policy by M. B. Razavi.²² In an article entitled, 'Maktab-e Vaseteh', Shakibnia built on his previous arguments and opined that Islam as a median school was a complete social system, simultaneously concerned with Man's spiritual and material needs and thus capable of securing his welfare and well-being. The philosophical basis of this school, he argued, was the worship of God and faith in creation and resurrection. The economic foundations were rooted in the abolition of class distinctions and the creation of equal opportunities for growth, development and the provision of welfare for all. Politically and socially, Shakibnia argued, the median school was founded on freedom and equality.²³ 'One could define the median school as a socialism that is established on the basis of the Islamic system', he could be said in general that the real and true socialism was any other outlook but this.²⁴ Shakibnia concluded by arguing that the achievement of an ideal world, free of injustice, exploitation, and oppression, philosophical formulas was only possible under a god-worshipping median school.

In a second article under the same title, Shakibnia called the median school an ideology which could interpret the world and find solutions to emerging problems. His article thus presented a number of radical corollaries of the median school. Since God was the only absolute power, rendering all other human beings equal in their subjection to Him, 'the beggar and the king' stood as equals before Him, neither possessing any special privileges. Furthermore, the natural resources and raw materials that He as sole Creator had bestowed upon man were to be shared equally among all. And finally, only He was to be obeyed and feared. All human powers had to be conceived as naught before him.²⁵ Shakibnia concluded by reminding believers that they were responsible for their acts and that their fate in the hereafter depended on their proper Islamic conduct in this life. The radical political and social implications of the article might explain why the series that was promised under the title of 'The Median School' in the future issues of *Ganj-e Shayegan* never appeared.

In an article entitled 'The Median Bloc', Razavi analysed the foreign policy implications of Shakibnia's theory. He argued that the world was divided into the Eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union, and the Western bloc led by the United States. Both blocs were 'world mongering colonizers and exploiters'.²⁶ Razavi argued that despite the numerical and geographical size of the median bloc, composed of the Muslim people and stretching from West Africa to East Asia, it had been continually controlled, subjugated or co-opted by the other two blocs. To secure the liberation and independence of the median bloc nations, Razavi argued for international cooperation and solidarity based on the ideals of Islam. He called upon those movements in the median bloc countries which shared the 'median world outlook' of 'God-worshipping socialism' to unite and liberate their countries from colonialism. The successful rise of the median bloc, however, depended upon the ability of each country to free itself from the surrogate dictatorial regimes which had been imposed upon it by colonial powers.²⁷

In the third issue of the journal, the editor, Abolfazl Mortazi apologized for the absence of Shakibnia's follow up article, explaining that it was delayed and the journal had to go to print without it.²⁸ When the fourth issue of *Ganj-e Shayegan* appeared in September 1953, after the anti-Mosaddeq coup, both Shakibnia and Razavi had articles in it but these addressed other issues and the idea of the median school, which had become too radical, was no longer pursued.²⁹

Although Shakibnia's 'median school theory' remained undeveloped, it was an important attempt to produce the outline of a theory for the God-Worshipping Socialists. It justified and provided a contemporary rationale for the fusion of Islam and socialism and provided an independent alternative to the polarized ideological set that prevailed in Iran. It could claim to be non-aligned in its ideology, and thus in its domestic and foreign policy. The formulation of this theory predated the writings of Khalil Maleki, the theoretician of the 'Third Force' (Niru-ye Sevvom).³⁰ Their respective conception of what constituted a socialist economic system might have differed, but the two theories were similar in their emphasis on

socialism as the most desirable means of regulating social relations. However, whereas Maleki's 'third force theory' sought to avoid Sovietization and Americanization by upholding and pursuing the tradition of European social democracy, the 'median school theory' relied on Islam, which it believed to be the most deep-rooted cultural identity of the Iranian people. While both theories were change-oriented and sought to provide a recipe for an independent path to national well-being based on social justice and freedom, each differed in its source of inspiration: in the case of Maleki's theory, the historical and intellectual practice of Europeans and in the case of Shakibnia's, thirteen centuries of Islamic-Iranian history.

The 'median school theory' and its 'median bloc' corollary, provided a home-based identity and frame of reference for young Islamic activists. The God-Worshipping Socialist militant was thus armed with an ideological kit and a proclaimed purpose: the attainment of political power and the establishment of a God-Worshipping Socialist order. Razavi's formulations gave the ideology the internationalist orientation which the Movement originally possessed. The God-Worshipping Socialists were, therefore, entrusted with the Herculean mission of struggling against the two 'evil' ideological blocs of East and West both inside Iran and within the median bloc. The more difficult the task, the greater the stature and self-esteem of those involved in it.

Based on a religious philosophical foundation, therefore, the members of the Movement possessed a radical, even semi-Marxian interpretation of modern socio-economic relations. The extent to which, at the time, all their members were aware of the fact that their ideology incorporated a number of socio-economic and political concepts popularized by Marxism is, however, not clear. Despite the animosity of the majority of the Movement's members towards the Soviet Union, its assessment of international power relations remained essentially anchored in a Leninist conception of antagonistic contradictions between the imperialist and subjugated countries of the world. Furthermore, in its newspaper it called on workers and peasants to unite and overthrow the 'feudal-bourgeois' economic system which it believed was the source of underdevelopment.³¹ Another characteristic of the majority of the Movement's members was their lack of respect for the institutional clergy. *Mardom-e Iran* ridiculed and derided the traditional clergy presenting a feeble, helpless and impotent vision of the founders of the Movement. The God-Worshipping Socialists argued that instead of teaching the people the ideas, courageous acts and heroic sacrifices of the imams and thus inspiring and exciting the people to rebel against the status quo, the clerics portrayed the other imams as defenceless and weak cowards who experienced a ignominious and vulgar death at the hands of their enemies.³² The clerical presentation of the faith as one of quietism and rituals and the shedding of tears. Contrary to the Kar Shi'i Islam, God-Worshipping Socialists, presented the Movement as a revolutionary vanguard of a progressive and liberating Shi'i Islam.

add 23
years
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establishing a new social order. This, they argued, was the objective of their faith and its hero and symbol, Imam Ali.³⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, to find the GWS initially distancing themselves from, and finally opposing and publicly condemning, Kashani for his anti-Mosaddeqist positions.³⁵

The God-Worshipping Socialists, brought to a logical and radical conclusion the ideas and thoughts with which members of the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths in Mashhad had toyed. For many young and politicized members of the Centre, adherence to the Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists, therefore, seemed a radical yet natural step. Ali Shari'ati was among those who made this transition and his future works clearly represent his debt to this school of thought.

From Child to Adult

Ali Shari'ati, the first child of Mohammad-Taqi and Zahra, was born on 24 November 1933 in the small village of Kahak, about 70 kilometres from Sabzevar. Zahra's family lived in Kahak and Ali was born in his maternal grandfathers' home.¹ He was the first and the only male child of the family. With his three sisters, Tahereh, Tayebah and Batul (Afsaneh), Ali grew up in the security of a caring urban lower middle class family. Zahra, who came from a family of smallholders, was the typical dedicated and hard-working woman. She was said to be so concerned with her religious faith that one of Shari'ati's childhood friends, who frequented Ali's house often, never remembers having seen her face even once.² Like most traditional devout Muslims, she believed in fate and embraced her position in life with patience and gratitude.³

Zahra managed the home and raised the children while Mohammad-Taqi was either pursuing his religious and political activities or working at more than one educational establishment to earn a living. What she could not give her children in terms of a classical education, as she was herself unschooled, she provided in terms of her exemplary behaviour. Her stamina and patience facilitated life in a household which was always faced with stringent financial conditions. Ali, however, like all young boys who are directly confronted with their mother as the main figure of authority at home when father is out, would get into quibbles and disputes with her. Sometimes he would bother her so much that Zahra would complain to Mohammad-Taqi when he returned from work at nights.⁴ Passing disputes and wrangling aside, the relationship between Ali and his mother was, however, one of sublime mutual love.⁵

Ali's own account of his mother is highly respectful. With a certain pride he confirms that important aspects of his character and nature seem to have been inherited or acquired from her. His 'mystical sensitivity mingled with violence, endurance and tenderness' are attributed to her.⁶ His father, for whose knowledge and social status Ali had a great deal of esteem, is said to have taught him the method of scientific and logical thought and imbued him with an ethical and political spirit.⁷ Ali venerated his father, yet he also feared him.

Born in a modest family, Ali grew up learning that righteousness and ethical

propriety were virtues that bestowed social respect and status, not money. Instead of feeling ashamed of their relative penury, the Shari'ati family took pride in it. In view of the family's modest earnings it was Zahra who willingly accepted all kinds of personal sacrifices. She accepted an austere life, often eating the simplest of provisions while feeding her family sufficiently. Oblivious to the quality and style of her clothing, she made sure that the other members of the family would look respectable.⁸ Zahra would walk long distances to find the best possible bargains in Mashhad to provide the maximum possible with the meagre income of the household.

Some of Ali's school-mates at primary, and later at high school, have recalled aspects of his relative poverty. He once told a friend that at home the family's 'royal meal' was served on Friday nights the day of the week on which they ate meat in the traditional Iranian soup, *abgusht*, the main ingredients of which are lamb, potato, split-peas, beans and tomato sauce. A classmate remembered the worn-out clothes he wore at primary school and later, in high school, friends remembered him and his father sharing clothes. In high school, when Ali and his friends would stop on their way home after school to buy something to eat, it was Ali who was usually penniless.

Ali's Primary School

In the autumn of 1941, a month after the allied invasion of Iran, Ali entered the first grade. The Shari'atis had spent the summer of 1941 in the village of Mazinan and Ali recalls that, after the news of the invasion, his father left them in the village and went back to Mashhad to find out what was going on.⁹ As a young boy starting primary school Ali must have witnessed the presence and movement of Soviet troops in Mashhad. These were difficult times. Bread was hard to come by. Rice or *shum*, as the Mashhadis called it, was the supper of the wealthy. Many urban families went to their beds at night hungry. At this time, Mohammad-Taqi was the director of studies – a post with both educational and disciplinary functions – at a prestigious private school called Ibn Yamin. The position of the director of studies, which was educational as well as disciplinary, was a prominent one at the time. It was probably because of Mohammad-Taqi's employment at Ibn Yamin that Ali went to school there. One of his classmates recalls that he and Ali started school in a classroom located in the cellar. At the time, Ibn Yamin had many students from religious minorities such as Jews and Armenians.¹⁰ Ali, who was afflicted by mange and had lost some of his hair, used to wear a felt hat. Although at primary school he was rather ashamed of his disease and wore his hat to cover his bald patches, later his burgeoning self-confidence allowed him to make regular jokes about it. Some of his friends remember that in a new class, he would be the first to jest about his own baldness before anyone else would think about teasing him on the subject.

At primary school, Ali was not very sociable. Quiet and timid, he was a loner whose self-imposed marginalization separated him from the activities of all his peers.¹¹ According to one of his classmates, he neither mingled very much with other children nor did he play football, the customary group sport of boys of his age.¹² In his own recollections of childhood, Shari'ati echoes this sense of solitude and distance from the kids around him, affirming that as a young boy, he was a loner.¹³ Even among guests and friends of the family, he withdrew from the crowd. Sitting among his parents' visitors, his thoughts would turn inwards and he would speak, smile and even frown at himself.¹⁴ Friends and relatives teased him whenever they caught him day-dreaming and Ali shied away in silence.¹⁵ Sometimes, when people spoke to him, he would be so immersed in his own thoughts that when obliged to answer or acknowledge something he would make irrelevant, unintelligible and sometimes ridiculous remarks. In class, as a childhood friend recalls, he would constantly gaze out of the window.¹⁶ Living in his own cocoon, he was oblivious to the world around him.

During the summer vacations the young Ali would go to Kahak or to Mazinan to visit his grandparents. Both villages were located on the edge of the desert and Ali enjoyed these trips. The natural magnificence and splendour of the desert, especially at nights, left a great impression on the young boy. His poetic imagery and his accounts of the desert in Kavir are the result of his long hours of solitary contemplation during these summer visits.¹⁷ Most of his schoolmates remained in Mashhad and continued to see one another. Ali's absences meant that he was looked upon as a provincial boy whose solitary behaviour was construed by some of his friends as a result of his feeling of estrangement in the big city!¹⁸

All the way through school, Ali was neither interested in his studies nor motivated to work hard. He disliked studying and would try everything to avoid his home-work. But confronted with his demanding father he always made a hasty attempt at it just before leaving for school in the mornings. If the popular notion held in the Shari'ati household that Ali needed two hours every morning to search for his clothes and get ready for school is true, it is not surprising that he was regularly late.¹⁹ His absent-mindedness, disorganization and carelessness as a young school boy soon became an accepted, though perhaps not appreciated, aspect of Ali's character.

In primary school, he often skipped classes. At times he would go to school but hide somewhere in the building to avoid his classes.²⁰ It was not unusual to see him wearing unmatched socks or even one sock. His teachers would often complain to his father about his disinterest and indolence.²¹ Ali himself recalled in later life how much he disliked everything to do with school, be it going to class, studying, doing homework or behaving in the disciplined manner that was expected of him.²² He even refers to himself during this period as 'obtuse' and 'lazy'.²³ The recollections of his friends during his primary and secondary school years confirm that he was never a hardworking or an outstanding student. His performance was mediocre, but adequate enough to get him to a higher grade.²⁴

Mohammad-Taqi's son was expected to follow the model of his father, the highly respected teacher of Mashhad's reputable schools; the young Ali was not fulfilling that expectation.

Despite his disinterest in what was taught at school, Ali loved to read. His father recalls that he had worried about his son's health since he was in the fifth and sixth grade of primary school. Ali would stay up reading with his father until late at night and sometimes into the early morning hours even after his father went to bed.²⁵ Ali also says that he became acquainted with his father's 2000-volume library during his first years at primary school.²⁶ He recalls how, from that time, he immersed himself in books which became his best friends. It seems that in practice he replaced learning in the class-room with learning at home, where he could choose to read what excited and interested him. Self-education, Ali claims, was the reason why, in each of his classes, he was 100 lessons ahead of the rest of the class and 99 ahead of most of his teachers.²⁷ This did not, however, mean that he was at the top of his class. Ali recalled that Saburi Jannati, his Persian teacher in the sixth grade, referred to him as 'a student who is more educated than all his teachers and lazier than all his classmates'.²⁸

In stark contrast to the sombre and solitary account of Ali's childhood, there exists another, very different story. The only feature it has in common with the first is Ali's disinterest in school. This second account attributes his dislike of school work to his passion for fun and games in the street. Typically for a hearty ten-year-old brat, he wanted to organize the neighbourhood kids to play all conceivable games from 'cops and robbers' to flying paper kites. He himself recalls that he spent his time flying kites, training pigeons or wandering in the streets.²⁹ He was so full of vitality, frivolity and so carefree that even when he sat down to study with a diligent friend, everyone suspected him of scheming to distract the poor soul and lure him into mischief.³⁰ According to this version, at least for some time, Ali was a mischievous and playful boy under whose influence the serious and pensive types in the neighbourhood were 'misguided'. According to Ali, however, it was under the influence of his closest childhood friend, Falsafi, that he put aside his old carefree ways and became interested in his studies. The attractions of 'cops and robbers' and playing with trained pigeons only gradually faded.³¹ Aside from the fact that he himself refers to and writes so candidly about his playful period, the recollections of Shari'ati friends at secondary school confirm this aspect of his character. Whereas in primary school his friends remembered him as a solitary and introverted boy, in high school they remembered him as the opposite. It seems as if, by that time, Ali had gradually found his self-confidence.

Secondary School

After finishing primary school at Ibn Yamin, in September 1947 Ali entered Ferdowsi High School. At the time, Mashhad had two high schools for boys.

Ferdowsi's library, science laboratories, sports facilities and theatre hall made it the better of the two. Nevertheless, each class contained around fifty pupils. The students sat at brown-coloured benches with tables attached to them. Each bench had room for three students. Again, Ali went to Ferdowsi because at this time Mohammad-Taqi was a regular and respected teacher of Arabic and literature there. At Ferdowsi, once in the seventh grade, the students were divided into two sections on the basis of their age (or perhaps, as some suggest, their foreign language – Ali opted for French).

In high school, Ali was popular with his friends, who considered him lazy, yet sociable and great fun to be around. He was known as a calm, quick-tongued wise guy whose selective witticisms would break the silence, disrupt order in class and throw the kids into fits of laughter, enraging his teachers.³² From Ali's own recollection of his high school years it is evident that he played an important role in the gags and plots conceived by the students to ridicule their teachers. Their naughty schemes and practical jokes included bringing in a mouse and setting it loose in class.³³ One day in the ninth grade, Mr Binesh, Ali's chemistry teacher asked him for his homework, Ali responded by saying '*masbuq nabudam*', a very literary way of saying, 'I was not informed'. The students burst out laughing but Binesh, who thought that Ali had cracked a joke too many, gave him a good beating.³⁴

Ali was known to his close friends at secondary school as a gourmet who had an insatiable appetite for sweet Persian melons (*kharbuzeh*) and mulberries (*tut*) which he would eat until he had a stomach ache.³⁵ Often after school the youngsters either walked or piled one on top of the other on a bicycle and went to the 'Bagh-e Melli' park. On their way, they would stop to buy their favourite afternoon munchies – inevitably, season permitting, melons and mulberries.³⁶ Ali was usually penniless, but his friends would pool whatever money they had to buy the goods. From the eighth grade he had started smoking – a secret well kept from his father. He bought cheap, unfiltered, Homa cigarettes; but the expense of supporting his habit did not leave him with much money for other things.

Ali completed his ninth grade at Ferdowsi. However, instead of following through to his high school diploma he took another path. In 1950, at the behest of his father, he sat for the rigorous Teachers' Training College (*Daneshsara-ye Moqaddamati*) entrance exam. Safavieh, an intimate friend of Shari'ati during his school years, believes that because Mohammad-Taqi was a teacher himself, he wanted his son to follow in his footsteps.³⁷ In addition, the fact that Mohammad-Taqi taught Arabic and Religious Studies at the Teachers' Training College must have also played a role in Ali's transfer. Ali's own account, however, cites the family's poverty as the main reason.³⁸ The college was a selective two year, male school with a boarding section.³⁹ Once admitted, all expenses including boarding and tuition, were paid by the government. Students also received an allowance of 80 rials per month, a goodish sum at the time. Those who were boarders and lived in Mashhad, such as Ali, were allowed to go home on Thursday nights and return to school on Saturday mornings. The college imposed strict rules and regulations.

Each day, the students were ordered out of bed before sunrise. After morning prayers and physical exercises they arranged their beds and cupboards and proceeded to breakfast, after which classes began. The boys were obliged to have crew cuts and the college demanded spic-and-span physical appearance and attire.

Ali was not alone at the college. Four of his friends, Akbar Safavieh, Gholam-Hossein Daneshtalab, Nasrollah Davudi and Kazem Rajavi, classmates at Ferdowsi high school went there with him. Ali was still, in this period, known for his lack of discipline and sloppiness. He never made his bed and he never tidied his cupboard. Daneshtalab, whose bed was next to Ali's, recalls how he regularly helped him out by making his bed so that he would not get into trouble with the authorities.⁴⁰ In order to stay in bed as long as possible in the mornings, Ali slept in his clothes. The college had a debating society in which he participated and he even once, unsuccessfully, ran for its presidency. He also took part in cultural and theatrical activities which the students organized once or twice a month.

At College, Ali would raid the other students' stock of dried fruits and nuts stored in their cupboards.⁴¹ During the obligatory three-hour study period in the evenings he refused to work and made such a nuisance of himself that others were distracted.⁴² His jokes were a great source of amusement for his classmates, who quickly gathered around him during the breaks.⁴³ A particular target of his ridicule and mockery was Bahadorzadeh, the director of the boarding school as well as the gym teacher. Ali's aversion to all kinds of sport, which dated back to primary school, persisted and he would continuously mock the idea of physical education and try to find ways to get out of it.⁴⁴ Naturally Bahadorzadeh, the gym teacher, harassed him for his lack of enthusiasm. In return, Ali conceived a repertoire of jokes about Bahadorzadeh which circulated around the college.⁴⁵ He had a special sense of humour. Daneshtalab recalls that one day, in the middle of the college football field, Ali started throwing good size stones at him. Jokingly, Daneshtalab asked what was wrong. Ali responded, 'This is the economic aid of developed countries to the less developed countries!'⁴⁶

Ali's active political engagement began during this period and soon he became an influential Mosaddeqist figure in the college.⁴⁷ Since the diverse political sympathies of the students reflected those of Iranian society at the time, it was inevitable that public political debates and tensions would also be reproduced in microcosm among them. The pro-Tudeh students, although in a minority, were supported by a few pro-Tudeh teachers, most of whom were teachers of mathematics. The Mosaddeqist students, who called themselves *daneshamuzan-e melli* or 'nationalist students', and lacked proper organization and leadership constantly clashed with the well-organized partisans of the Tudeh. In class, the pro-Tudeh teachers tried to propagate their ideological position and Ali would challenge their anti-Mosaddeq and anti-religious discourse. Once, a verbal clash in class between Ali and a pro-Tudeh teacher led to the teacher insulting Ali, the departure of the majority of students from class and the boycott of that particular teacher.⁴⁸ The two sides constantly debated and engaged one another, sometimes trying to convince

and at other times trying to intimidate each other.

One morning in the Spring of 1952, Ali entered the dormitory. As usual a group of pro-Tudeh students were sitting on a bed chatting away. Kidding around, Ali said, 'what are you plotting again?'⁴⁹ Using his sarcastic remark as a pretext, his pro-Tudeh classmates attacked him. Delshad hit him on the head with a sugar cone and the others gave him a good beating leaving him bruised and bloodied. Dismayed and scandalized at the maltreatment of their friend, the Mosaddeqists retaliated fiercely. Outside the college premises, the pro-Tudeh students who had attacked Ali were badly beaten and routed by a large contingent of Mosaddeqists. One of the pro-Tudeh students had to be hospitalized because of his injuries. An official complaint was made by the injured students and a few of Ali's Mosaddeqist friends spent a couple of days in prison.⁵⁰ To put an end to the spreading political violence, Mr Amuzegar, the new supervisor of the boarding school, convinced that Ali had provoked the incident, slapped him in the face. Ali is said to have sulked and sought solace from his father.⁵¹

Ali graduated from the Teachers' Training College in 1952. From the autumn of the same year he was employed by the Ministry of Education and was sent to the Ketabpur primary school at Ahmadabad. At Ketabpur, Ali taught all subjects to all the elementary grades. Although Ahmadabad was not very far from Mashhad, there was no regular bus service between the two localities so Ali decided to buy a bicycle. As the principal teacher of the village, he was supposed to spend the whole day at the school working with the children. The regular hours and the repetition of the subject matter bored and tired him. He came to feel imprisoned and confined to a suffocating environment. To express his displeasure at his predicament on 23 October 1952, just after he started the job, he copied a poem called, 'The misfortune of being a teacher' by Mehdi Hamidi and dedicated it to his friend Delasa'i. As an introduction to the poem, he wrote, 'the reason for this poem is that gale-like events assigned my fate to primary school children and the wheel of time imprisoned me in the corner of classrooms.'⁵²

At Ketabpur Ali befriended the caretaker of the school, who felt so close to him that he even interfered in his classes when he felt that he had some familiarity with the subject being taught. Shari'ati recalled that one day in class, while explaining the usefulness of cows, the custodian entered, interjected and recounted the story of his cow and enumerated the valuable services it rendered.⁵³ To break the monotony of his life as a village teacher, Ali invited his old friends to lunch cooked by the custodian and to this day Delasa'i and Sarjami' remember the *abgusht* they shared.⁵⁴

Having graduated from the Teachers' Training College, Ali obtained his teaching certificate, but not his high school diploma. Intent on completing the latter he started preparing for the final exams while teaching at Ketabpur. In June 1954 he took the comprehensive exams, both written and oral, for a high school certificate in literature. According to his official report card, he succeeded with an average grade of 13.39 out of 20.⁵⁵

From secondary school until his entrance into university Ali was popular among his friends, not necessarily as an intellectual, but as a fun person to have around.⁵⁶ He was thought of as honest and likeable, someone without the slightest trace of spitefulness. Whether it was a school field trip to Ramsar, such as the one organized by the Teachers' Training College in April 1952, or regular friendly outings, he was always at the heart of the in-group. His popularity is, indeed, said to have caused some jealousy.

After the 1953 *coup* against Mosaddeq, Ali and his close friends went out to lunch on Fridays and organized picnics around Mashhad during the summers of 1953 and 1954. One of their favourite places, Abardeh, was a scenic spot at the foot of the mountain next to a river. On one of their long visits there, all the chores from cooking to washing the dishes were divided among the friends. Each day four people divided into two groups became responsible for providing services so that the rest of the group could do what they pleased. On the day that Ali's team was supposed to do the cooking, Ali joked and quipped his way out of it and a friend took on his work. Fakhreddin Hejazi who was Ali's team partner and who had come to Mashhad after the 1953 *coup*, tried to use Ali's tactics, shirking his responsibility. He too refused to cook. But what Ali could get away with others could not. Once lunch was prepared by the person who had volunteered to cook instead of Ali, the boys decided to punish Hejazi. He was rolled in a carpet and gently tied to a tree to witness the others eat.⁵⁷ From the evidence provided by Ali's friends at the time it could be safely said that Ali's character was far from being that of a misanthrope.

The Adult Child

There was, however, another side to Ali's character. Reflecting on his childhood years, he observed that he always felt like a younger brother to his father and an older brother to all the boys in his age group. Consequently, he never enjoyed the carefree childish moments experienced by his peers.⁵⁸ Shari'ati presents a picture of an adolescence and youth dominated by a sense of 'despair' and 'grief'. The former, he believed, was the fruit of his philosophical studies and the latter the outcome of his involvement with Sufism.⁵⁹ This social isolation was for him a consequence of his role of 'counsellor', always obliged to provide answers and explanations when others became confused with 'scientific, philosophical, religious, political and literary problems'.⁶⁰ He wrote, 'my living condition, education, thoughts and especially my spirit forced me to grow old early in my childhood.'⁶¹ Ali's sense of grief and despair during high school, however, must have been a private feeling, since his public face was essentially jovial.

As Shari'ati grew up, a sense of self-imposed dejection, anxiety and melancholia became an important hallmark of his character. He recalled that ever since the age of seven he felt as if he was imprisoned.⁶² Life on earth was his prison. He

longed to end the suffering of separation from God by 'getting over to the other side of the wall'.⁶³ At times, he seemed to relish this persistent state. Convinced that suffering was the natural outcome of an inner knowledge and an enlightenment reserved only for a selected few, he seemed to welcome it. Possessed of this inner knowledge he was destined to bear the burden of everyone's woes. Shari'ati believed that he was not born to lead a 'pleasant and satisfying' life.⁶⁴ On the contrary, he seemed convinced that he was destined to be a martyr. It is in this vein that he referred to Christ, a symbol of martyrdom, as his brother.⁶⁵

Shari'ati associated suffering and pain with consciousness and responsibility and a carefree deportment with ignorance and irresponsibility. This might explain why his references to the carefree moments of his youth are more limited than his recollection of suffering. He even lashed out at those who enjoyed the simplest of worldly pleasures. Behind every manifestation of joy, every burst of laughter, every display of enjoyment and happiness, he felt 'a wave of despicable and contemptible stupidity'.⁶⁶ Caving under the burden of the existential questions, uncertainties and problems that beseeched him, he wrote extensively about the 'suffering of existence', a condition which gradually became a fundamental aspect of, if not the reason for, his life.⁶⁷

Later, Shari'ati's intimate relationship with suffering manifested itself in a number of other ways. He recounts how, at the height of his political activities, in the tradition of the Malamatiyan, he thought of demeaning and humiliating himself in the eyes of the public.⁶⁸ He wrote numerous 'fictional' accounts of his own disgraceful and dishonourable political conduct. He accused himself of being in secret 'collusion with the regime', and presented himself as an ambitious and immoral individual whose sole objective was to obtain fame and fortune.⁶⁹ Even though he thought of and wrote such self-blaming accounts he eventually burnt them.⁷⁰ The Malamatiyan, or 'self-blamers', were a devout and pious Sufi sect whose members sought to draw the disapproval of the community by publicly committing irreligious acts while privately performing their religious duties conscientiously. The desire to become the subject of ridicule, humiliation and punishment was another objective of the members of this sect. Shari'ati's intention to bring political disgrace upon himself is an aspect of inviting pain, suffering and humiliation. He believed that by subjecting himself to such strong negative feelings he would strengthen his inner resolve and harden his mettle. At a point in his life, when he witnessed 'the pessimism and anger of the young generation towards himself', he wrote, 'how the members of the Malamatiyyeh must have taken pleasure in their acts.'⁷¹ Later, Ali reflected on the diagnosis of a close friend, a psychiatrist, who believed that he and his father suffered from a type of masochism.⁷²

Contradictory Moods

In the autobiographical writings on his life from primary school to the end of his high school, Ali presented two diametrically opposed pictures of himself. His own account of this duality is partially corroborated by the accounts of his different friends and acquaintances. There are essentially two different Alis, one private and the other social. One is pensive and philosophical, spending hours thinking about a line from Maurice Maeterlinck, the other a naughty brat who is constantly waiting for an opportunity to disrupt the class and send the students rolling with laughter.⁷³ If the two opposite accounts of Ali, as presented by himself, are accepted as partially accurate they would have to be reconciled with one another.

This may be done in two ways. First, a chronological order in his behaviour may be assumed. It can be demonstrated that in public Ali's behaviour went through certain transformations between primary and secondary school. Both in public and in private he was rather quiet, introverted and shy at primary school, while in his secondary school years, at least in public, his quick wits and his gradually emerging caustic sense of humour gave him a different reputation. In his writings, Ali emphasizes his despair and grief at this time in his life, which could very well have reflected his inner mood. The picture of a jolly person depicted by his friends reflected his public face. Ali himself played an important role in leading his school friends to believe that his life was summed up in his carefree activities with them.⁷⁴ It seems as if he purposely kept his more profound thoughts and ideas secret from his friends.

Second, it can be argued that some degree of both these extremities dwelt in, coexisted and struggled in Ali's character, producing different moods and impulses. He seems to have had a symbiotic relationship with grief and despair, which also acted as the generator of his mental activities in private. Even though in his writings he found fault with carefree glee and wished to repress it, he seems to have engaged in it and enjoyed it. Perhaps it constituted an escape from his heavy inner world and a precious link with the world outside. Ali's early studies, and his subsequent philosophizing, imposed a sense of dry serious-mindedness and melancholy. The need he felt to find an answer to all the riddles that he discovered in the books he read, aged and matured him. Yet the natural inclinations of his age and his nature made him a cheerful individual. The personality and identity crises which Shari'ati refers to in the period between 1947 and 1950 are an indication of an inner contradiction that inflicted him throughout his life.⁷⁵ Later, Ali wrote at length about his different and warring 'selves'. He continuously posed the question 'who am I?', a question which gave him the strength and vitality to search for a correct answer.

In a way Ali became accustomed to living with his two distinct behavioural patterns. Ali the sociable and carefree soul masterfully hid Ali, the pensive, sensitive and romantic thinker from his close school friends. No one was apparently intimate enough to be allowed into his private world of reflection and intellectual

queries. It is not until later when first his political activities, then his extensive political writings and poetry in the local newspapers reveal his intellectual capacity and his romantic sensitivity to his school friends.

Ali and his Books

More than once, Ali referred to the instrumental role that the study of certain books played in the formation of his mind and ideas during different periods of his life. His reading list went through a radical transformation as he proceeded from primary to secondary school. At primary school, he recalled reading different kinds of books, ranging from the Persian translation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* to a variety of books from the Persian translation of the famous French collection, 'Que sais-je?' In this collection, he read the volumes on *Vitamins* and *History of Cinema* both translated by Hasan Safari, and *Great Philosophies*, translated by Ahmad Aram. Ali's curiosity was not narrow. He also recalled reading popular best-sellers such as *Zan-e mast* (The drunk woman).⁷⁶

Secondary school, which according to Ali coincided with his initiation first to philosophy and then to Sufism, gave a more specific direction to his readings. Between 1947, when he entered secondary school and 1959 when he went to Paris, Ali's reading fell into four major categories. First, what he thought of as philosophical works. Second, his readings in Sufism, which according to his own account followed a period of depression resulting from his philosophical readings. Third, his political reading, which essentially began around 1950 with the oil nationalization movement. Fourth, literature and especially poetry which constituted his true passion and to which he probably allocated the greatest amount of time. While all four types of reading overlapped during certain periods, Ali's interest in politics in the 1950s essentially eclipsed his enthusiasm for philosophical and Sufi literature. His thirst and love for poetry, however, weaves throughout this period.

The first writer who seems to have left a deep impression on him ever since the first year of secondary school is Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian Symbolist writer and poet. Ali refers to this Nobel laureate as the person who induced him to reflect and meditate on truths that exist behind discernible realities. He is lauded for having opened his eyes to a world beyond evident appearances. His contemplative mental system is said to have been put into motion after he reflected on a line from Maeterlinck that read, 'when we blow out the candle, where does its flame go?'⁷⁷ Maeterlinck could be considered as one of Ali's first spiritual teachers.⁷⁸ The central issues in the works of Maeterlinck, are his obsession with death, exaltation of spiritual love, the primacy of the soul and his deep disposition for spiritualism. Ali's preoccupation with all these issues, throughout his life, may therefore be traced to Maeterlinck.

In an article on Maeterlinck, written in 1954 and published in the daily Khorasan, Ali praised him for having posed certain fundamental questions on the

reason and purpose of creation and life. Most people, he wrote, abandoned reflection on such questions and pursued their normal life. Some were content to have prepared a response, yet only a few, such as Maeterlinck, set out to find the truth.⁷⁹ To Ali, Maeterlinck must have seemed a European gnostic, since he mentions Maeterlinck's reference to the Sufi belief that human beings are constantly attached to God both before and after death. Maeterlinck's monograph on ethics of mysticism, *La Sagesse et la destinée*, was probably unknown to Ali since he does not mention it. Yet it is clear that, in what he had read by him, he had sensed the man's mysticism. Ali mentions that after his period of philosophizing, essentially based on the works of Maeterlinck, he turned to Sufism. Ironically, it appears to have been a Western figure who first kindled Shari'ati's deep but vacillating interest in Sufism.

In a series of books on bees, termites, ants and spiders, Maeterlinck combined philosophy and natural history. His poetic, symbolic and mystical style as well as the content of these works constituted the ideal raw material on which Shari'ati could reflect, speculate and cerebration. Ali read the Persian translations of *La vie des abeilles*, *La vie des termites*, *La vie des fourmis* and *L'araignée de verre*.⁸⁰ Unabashedly, he confessed that what he read was at times more than he could grasp and synthesize, depressing him to the point of contemplating suicide.⁸¹ In a very romantic piece of prose, eulogizing death, (Let me Die) 'Begozar bemiram', he wrote, 'Let me die so that in the arms of eternity and in the desert of extinction I would be rescued from my agony and the pain which I dare not speak about.'⁸² Apart from Maeterlinck, during this period he also read the works of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, Franz Kafka and the French Nobel laureate, Anatole France.⁸³ Anatole France's hostility towards the bourgeois order and his firm belief in social justice and the liberty of conscience as well as his sympathy for socialism seems to have made an impression on the young Shari'ati.

The philosophical and cognitive uncertainty and crisis caused by his first wave of serious studies, directed Ali towards Sufi literature. He recalled that in secondary school he read and collected the sayings of great Sufi's such as Hallaj, Junayd, Qazi Abu Yusef, Shabastari, Qusheiri, Abu Said Abol-Kheirr and Bayazid Bastami.⁸⁴ A friend recalls that by the time he entered the University of Ferdowsi at Mashhad, he had already read the works of such Sufi notables as Ayn al-Quzat Hamadani, Mowlavi and Attar's *Taskerat al-Awlia*.⁸⁵ Shari'ati himself explains how his reading of Sufi literature satisfied and fulfilled him.⁸⁶ On a cold winter's night, when he was gripped by philosophical scepticism and uncertainty, toying with the idea of suicide at the romantic sight of the Estakhr-e Kuhsangi in Mashhad, Shari'ati had found consolation and a meaning to life in Mowlavi's *Masnavi*; the eternal spiritual repository of Oriental philosophy. On that particular night, sifting through all the ideas that rushed through his head, it was finally the words and the thoughts of Mowlana that had saved him from self-destruction.

While Ali was submerged in his intoxicating mystical books and led his own kind of life in the clouds, a 'sudden hurricane' jolted him from his 'peaceful seat of

isolation'.⁸⁷ The hurricane was Mosaddeq's nationalist movement which hurriedly closed the pages of Shari'ati's philosophical and mystical books and opened the pages of other kinds of book. As his friends came to ask him questions to which he was expected to have answers, Shari'ati started to read political books. He recalls that they kept asking him the typical question of 'what is to be done'? To answer their questions Shari'ati had to read whatever he could find of Lenin, Chernishevsky, Dostoyevsky and Jaurès.⁸⁸ His background knowledge of the history of Western thought, as well as his study of Anatole France, which he had read independently in secondary school, came to his rescue. On the basis of his own writings between 1950 and 1954 it is evident that he was also reading the multitude of newspapers and reviews published by different political tendencies, parties and associations in Iran. Traces of a number of core arguments in such reviews are discernible in such important works of his during this period as 'Maktab-e Vasete-e Islam' ('The median school of Islam').

The Islamic literature with socio-political content and overtones that was available to Ali should also be seen as an important aspect of his reading material. In view of Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati's interest in Imam Ali's sermons, it would be logical to assume that Ali was also well versed in them. The fact that Mohammad-Taqi was also a master of Qur'anic exegeses, and given the close relationship between father and son, it seems evident that Ali must have been exposed to the content and also a sociopolitical interpretation of the Qur'an from a relatively early age. Ali also had access to various Islamic books on the lives of the Prophet and the Imams, the Tradition of the Prophet and that of the Shi'i Imams, and Islamic historical texts such as that of Ibn Hisham to whom he often referred. Furthermore Ali was exposed to the works of such controversial Islamic figures as Kasravi and Sanglaji.

Poetry was probably Ali's single consistent love throughout these years. More often than once he wrote that although he had spent his life in the political arena, politics was incompatible with his spirit and that by nature he was fundamentally a poet. Shari'ati's initiation to poetry must have started with his reading of such classical Persian poets as Hafez, Sa'di, Ferdowsi and Mowlavi. In his writings, he refers to the works of these renowned traditional figures and records his opinion of them. It is, however, with the rising tide of modern Iranian poetry pioneered by Nima Yushij that Ali found the kind of poetry that he appreciated most.

In 1952, Shari'ati presented his close friend Delasa'i with a handwritten anthology of poems compiled from his favourite poets.⁸⁹ This literary collection, written in green ink, includes some of Shari'ati's own poems both in the traditional and modern style. The notebook also contains a number of fine drawings by Shari'ati, one of which was inspired by Tavalloli's poem 'Raha' or 'Liberation'. The sketch depicts a woman breaking the chains on her hands. Half of the red covered 100-page notebook contains poems from Tavalloli's collection, *Raha*.

The other half contains selected poems from predominantly modernist poets interspersed with a few traditionalists. The collection represents Ali's literary taste

and preference at the time. It includes poems by Nader Naderpur, Ehsan Tabari, Fereidun Tavalloli, Mohammad Eqbal, Mahmud Farrokh, Mojtaba Minovi, Parviz Natel-e Khanlari, Malek al-Sho'ara Bahar and Paul Valery. From his own work, Shari'ati included six rhyming poems. Of particular interest is the inclusion of speeches by the Prophet Mohammad.

The Young Intellectual and Political Activist

'Suddenly a Hurricane Approached and Disturbed the World's Peace'

The politicization of Shari'ati effectively began when he was a student at the Teachers' Training College. The slogans and promises of different political parties during the oil nationalization movement appealed to the pure, innocent and idealistic dreams of the youth. This was a time of reawakening – a fiery interlude during which the routine of everyday life was interrupted. Political and social change required a new language, novel practices and a new type of political behaviour. No family, household or social institution could insulate itself from the political magic that filled the air. In this aura of activism young people were simultaneously novices and engaged militants striving to realize a dream. Yet history rarely allows the intermissions that enable young idealists to learn through pontification before acting.

Shari'ati's description of this period, during which the harnessed energy of a generation was released, is cogent and moving. He explains how events intervened in his own secluded world. 'Suddenly a hurricane approached and disturbed the world's peace,' he wrote. 'Gusts of struggle erupted from every corner and I too was jolted from my peaceful seat of isolation and ... the story began.'¹ During the early stages of the movement Shari'ati was so deeply immersed in his own world of poetry and Sufism that events seem to have passed him by. While most of his generation were becoming politicized and learning the significance of words such as despotism, exploitation, repression and bondage, Shari'ati admitted to have been comfortably living 'in the skies'.² Later he wrote, 'at the beginning of the movement I was not politicized.'³

Shari'ati's active membership of a political party commenced in 1950; but the groundwork of his socio-political consciousness was laid in the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths. Ali was eleven when the Centre was inaugurated. By the time he was fifteen it had become a significant modernist religious institution.

The subjects elaborated at the Centre by Mohammad-Taqi and other speakers were eye-opening and provocative for students who were gradually becoming sensitive to social issues. The speakers were intent on imparting a moral philosophy

based on the Qur'an. The ethical mind-set of the youngsters who attended their lectures was moulded on the basis of a socially, philosophically and politically relevant Islam more concerned with the temporal world than with the hereafter. Since the truth propagated by the Centre was not the traditional ritual-centred Islam of the older generation it was an attractive venue for Ali and his high school friends. Taher Ahmadzadeh recalls that the principle objective of the Centre's programme was to analyse and distinguish between the marrow or essence of Islam and its shell or appearance.⁴ In other words its purpose was to demonstrate that Islam possessed a marrow which could provide real solutions to emerging social, political and economic problems.⁵

From 1945, when Ali was twelve, until the Centre was closed for the first time in 1957 he attended its events and was instrumental in attracting some of his friends to it. Delasa'i recalls that, had it not been for Ali who had lured him towards the Centre, he would have probably never gone there.⁶ However, according to some of his friends, Ali was himself not a very regular attendant over these twelve years.⁷ Before Mohammad-Taqi began his lecture, young school boys at the Centre were encouraged to make a speech, recite the Qur'an, or read their own poetry and writings on religiously related issues.⁸ This was believed to be a useful exercise, preparing the younger ones to speak boldly before a crowd. Most of Ali's school-mates, including Delasa'i, participated in these events. Yet Ali is said to have avoided them.⁹ It was established practice on the nights when Mohammad-Taqi was ill for Taher Ahmadzadeh to replace him as the principal speaker. It is not until after 1953, when both Mohammad-Taqi and Taher were ill, that Ali became the main speaker.¹⁰

When the political fever of the oil nationalization movement became rampant every occasion was used to discuss the political situation, strategy and tactics. After the regular religious sessions were over, the younger members of the Centre, most of whom were Ali's friends, stayed behind to talk politics. The Centre gradually evolved into a hang out for these young men and even when Ali skipped his fathers' lectures he would try to meet his friends afterwards.¹¹ Delasa'i remembers many occasions on which Ali and his friends attended Mohammad-Taqi's lectures on Thursday and Friday nights, had a friendly chat at the Centre and then went out to dinner before going home.¹² The impact of the Centre on this group of young men was significant. It was a school which employed a modernist religious discourse to achieve the dual objective of battling political and religious reaction and blind obedience to anything other than God while cultivating righteousness, ethics and liberation theology. The Centre strengthened the religious convictions of some and they became steadfast practitioners of their faith.¹³ For many it provided an imperative religio-political support system, where they heard a politicized Islamic discourse which assured them that their faith had the concepts and tools to compete with Tudeh ideology.¹⁴ The Centre also trained a group of political activists whose major preoccupation became to combat despotism, inequality, submission to Western interests and injustice, personified by the shah.

Basing themselves on the model of the Centre, in 1951 the younger members, who were predominantly high school boys, decided to launch their own organization. At the behest of Sarjam'i, Delasa'i, Ra'isi, Hushyar and Abdolsalami, the Anjoman-e Eslami-e Daneshamuzan or (The High School Students' Islamic Association or HSIA) was founded in Mashhad.¹⁵ The meetings of the HSIA were first held on Thursday nights at the homes of Sarjam'i and Hushyar. At these meetings, which attracted a good number of students, religious topics were addressed and discussed. In 1952, Ali Shari'ati joined the HSIA. To prepare themselves theoretically in their battle with the young sympathizers and members of the Tudeh party, the members of the HSIA invited Ali to coach them in philosophy and the art of rhetoric.¹⁶ As the number of adherents grew considerably, the HSIA approached Mohammad-Taqi and obtained permission to hold its functions at the Centre.¹⁷ On Friday afternoons between 3 and 7, before Mohammad-Taqi began his exegesis of the Qur'an, Ali held his classes for the HSIA.

The stormy political atmosphere gradually dictated its own requirements and conditions. The loosely knit structure of the Centre and its educational objectives started to lose its appeal for the change-oriented activists that it had trained and educated. These young men were in search of political organizations where they could focus their energy and activity on clearly defined political objectives. The Centre had fulfilled its historical task as a preparatory school and springboard from which members leapt into the existing political parties.

The League for the Freedom of the Iranian People

Most of the young men at the Centre gradually gravitated towards the Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists.¹⁸ The move was natural, for if the Centre had become a party with an articulated ideology, its content and objectives would have been very similar. Had the Movement not merged with the Iran Party in May 1951, the young politicized members of the Centre would have probably joined it much sooner – the secular reputation of the Iran Party's notables, and its short flirtation with the Tudeh party had been a barrier to joining it for many of them.

In December 1952, Nakhshab and a number of high ranking members of the MGWS visited Mashhad.¹⁹ The object was to meet their members and recruit new blood. As they were still a political force within the Iran Party, they held a number of meetings at the party's headquarters and different social and professional groups, including high school students, were invited to attend them. While keeping in touch with his friends at the Centre, Qahari had joined the Iran Party back in the summer of 1951.²⁰ Kazem Sami, a regular attendant of the Centre and at the time a tenth-grade student was among those who listened to Nakhshab lecturing in Mashhad. Impressed by the political position he outlined and the proposals he made, Sami joined the Iran Party. Asked why he had not joined before, he alluded to the Movement saying that he wanted to join a political organization which was



against injustice (*zed-e zolm*) yet not hostile towards Islam.²¹

As long as Nakhshab's Movement remained within the Iran Party, Ali Shari'ati kept his distance. He avoided visiting its headquarters, even to see old friends who had joined because of the Islamic orientation of the Movement. At the time, Ali is said to have pressed the members of the Iran Party associated with the Movement to assert their religious identity and openly proclaim their Islamic tendency. 'Why don't you guys say that you are Islamic?', he would provocatively inquire.²² Shari'ati was in a way echoing the anxiety of the senior members of the Centre who had reservations about the secular orientation of the Iran Party and who felt that, however strongly committed, young members who joined it may be coerced into accepting and supporting positions they did not like.²³

After its split from the Iran Party and adoption of the name Jam'iyat-e Azadiye Mardom-e Iran or The League for the Freedom of the Iranian People, the Movement (now the League) remained loyal to the original principles of God-Worshipping Socialism.²⁴ It also remained a staunch partisan of Mosaddeq and his oil nationalization movement. The break was therefore a blessing for all those, including Ali Shari'ati, who wished to join Nakhshab's party yet had their reservations about accepting the leadership of the Iran Party.

Less than a month after the split, in March 1953, a group of nineteen modernist Islamic nationalists associated with the Centre joined or became closely affiliated with the League without rupturing their old ties. This group, which came to be known as the 'Centre's Group' in the League, included Ali Shari'ati, Delasa'i, Tajeddini, Sarjam'i, the Hakimi brothers, Mahmud Ahmadzadeh, Kazem Ahmadzadeh, Shakerinejad, Momken, Saraydarpur, Niknejad, Arabzadeh, Khatib, Harati, Fazlinejad and Safavieh. Kazem Sami is said to have played an instrumental role in luring them to the League.²⁵

As its headquarters, the League rented an old building with a spacious garden on Khosravi street in Mashhad, large enough to accommodate up to 500 people in political meetings and rallies. From its inception it organized two different sets of educational and instructional activities for its members and affiliates. First, once a week, an afternoon session of political discussion, critique and analysis was held for everyone during which a senior member responded to questions and concerns on current political issues. According to Qahari, one of the major issues of debate at the time was the deteriorating relationship between Mosaddeq and Kashani about which the League tried to provide a correct analysis. Second, the League attracted some sixty to seventy active students and to train them as political cadres it instituted a series of daily classes. Intended to raise the political and social consciousness of the newcomers, these classes provided them with a background in various relevant fields including speech making, history, economics, sociology, philosophy, law and the history of Islam.²⁶ Each class had about twelve students. In this programme, Ali Shari'ati taught sociology.

The growing radicalization of the League's position started in March 1953. The League demonstrated its increasingly anti-monarchist, anti-feudalist and anti-

capitalist stance through the contents of its newspaper, *Mardom-e Iran* or the Iranian People.²⁷ On the domestic political scene it continued to support Mosaddeq wholeheartedly while it intensified its attacks on the anti-Mosaddeqist forces that were regrouping around Zahedi and Kashani.²⁸ On 11 March 1953, the group of eight parliamentarians who had been entrusted with the job of arbitration between Mosaddeq and the shah pronounced their verdict in favour of Mosaddeq. On 19 April 1953, in an open telegram published in the League's newspaper, Ali Shari'ati and a number of other members in Mashhad petitioned the eight parliamentarians to implement the constitutional clause which stipulated that the shah had no right to intervene in the affairs of the state as he was a figurehead with no effective responsibilities. The telegram called on the people of Khorasan to rise and defend their national honour, dignity and integrity and concluded with the official slogan of the members of the League – *Piruz Mardom-e Iran*, 'Victory to the Iranian People'.²⁹ The dispatch of the telegram was the culmination of a pro-Mosaddeq demonstration called by the League and other Mosaddeqist groups in Mashhad on the same day. It is said that, since the rift between Kashani and Mosaddeq had become apparent, only a small group of 50 to 100 people attended the march which was led by Ali Shari'ati and Mehdi Hakimi.³⁰

The League also organized rallies and meetings during which a major speaker addressed the crowd. Qazi, who was an attendant of the Centre and had joined Khalil Maleki's Third Force, recalls that Ali Shari'ati's public speeches at the League's headquarters attracted a couple of hundred people.³¹ The crowd that gathered to hear him on these occasions was composed not only of members and sympathizers of the League, but also of the secular and socialist members of the Third Force.³² In the summer of 1953, Ali Shari'ati spoke at one of the major public meetings of the League at its own headquarters on 'The contradiction between Islam and the monarchy'.³³ While the monarchy was in place and the shah was still in Iran, Shari'ati's topic at a public meeting was both sensitive and bold. He would reiterate that only God could be an object of subservience and subordination and that the monarch, posing as an object of adulation, drove a wedge between the people and God. The content and tone of his speech, enunciating the incompatibility of Islam with the institution of monarchy, reflected the radical mood of the League which culminated in its open espousal of a republic by 17 August 1953.

On 19 August 1953, rogues and ruffians paid by the United States through the intermediary of its servile Iranian followers, took to the streets of Tehran chanting 'death to Mosaddeq'. The plan for a *coup d'état* was prepared by the CIA, elements of the court, the army and segments of the clergy. General Fazlollah Zahedi was entrusted with its implementation. On the next day Mosaddeq was arrested, Zahedi took power and a state of siege was proclaimed throughout the country. In Mashhad, as elsewhere, the turn of events and the repression that followed caught everyone by surprise.

The new conditions necessitated a change in political tactics. With the end of open political activity and freedom of speech, the Mosaddeqist forces turned to

other ways of pursuing their political objectives. On the heels of the *coup*, 2000 copies of a circular entitled 'The Movement Continues' announced the formation of a new and clandestine organization which pledged to follow the principles and policies of Mosaddeq. The *Nehzat-e Moqavemat-e Melli*, or National Resistance Movement of Iran (NRM), was composed of the representatives of the Mosaddeqist parties including the League. The decision of the League's leaders in Tehran to join the NRM, was only gradually communicated to the rank and file in distant parts of the country. League members like Shari'ati became automatic members unless they opted out.

In Mashhad, the NRM attracted the lion's share of the Mosaddeqist parties and those influential Mosaddeqists such as Taher Ahmadzadeh who had no party affiliations. The Mosaddeqists in Mashhad, as compared to those in the rest of Iran, were in a relatively favourable position since they possessed a secure public location in which they could congregate, exchange ideas and information, distribute clandestinely-produced pamphlets and leaflets and even arrange secret meetings and appointments.

With the suppression of political parties, once again on Thursday and Friday nights the Centre became the hub of Mosaddeqist political activity and agitation. As members of the NRM, Mashhad's Mosaddeqists were clandestine; yet as attendants of the Centre, they benefited from almost all the advantages and privileges of being public. As Taher Ahmadzadeh observed, the fact that the Centre was a well-respected religious organization, albeit a Mosaddeqist one, guaranteed its survival since the leaders of the *coup* had great pretensions to religiosity.³⁴ The existence of the Centre as a physical umbrella or front is probably one of the main explanations of why the Mashhad branch of the NRM became one of the biggest and most active provincial branches in the whole country. The activities of the Centre, the NRM and the Mosaddeqist forces in Mashhad became so enmeshed that it was impossible to distinguish their independent identities. As part of its regular activities, the Centre invited Mehdi Bazargan, a well known Mosaddeqist who was also one of the main political figures in the NRM, to visit Mashhad. Only a few weeks after the *coup*, in a thinly veiled speech against the shah at the Centre, Bazargan referred to the shah's past irreverence for religious practices and criticized him for his sudden pretensions to piety and religiosity.³⁵

The NRM branch in Mashhad was composed of three main cells or groups (*jaleseh*).³⁶ According to Jaleleddin Farsi, the main cell included the 'pious bazaaris', all either the founders or old members of the Centre. The members of this group are also said to have been very close to Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati who was sometimes present at their meetings. The second group was composed of those who were members of the state bureaucracy. The third and largest cell, which was founded and managed by Ali Shari'ati, belonged to the students.³⁷ In these meetings Ali is said to have presented the ideas and the content of what later became the Median School of Islam. The cell also studied and worked on the exegeses of a number of Qur'anic verses.

By 26 February 1954, the League's plenum session in Tehran decided that due to its rapid expansion it should become a party. It was, therefore decided that the League should adopt the name of its old newspaper. The *Hezb-e Mardom-e Iran* or the Iranian People's Party (IPP) was thus born. Again the affiliation of the League's members with the IPP was automatic. In Mashhad, the IPP conducted its activities through three clandestine party cells. Shari'ati's cell included, Fazlinejad, Abdolsalami and Sa'adat.³⁸ Shari'ati is said to have represented the IPP on the Mashhad branch of the NRM.³⁹ He was also a member of the Central Committee of Mashhad's NRM along with Taher Ahmadzadeh, Nur-Ali Tabandeh, Taqi Khoshnevisan, Zabiollah Asayesh, Hajji Amelizadeh (Chairman), Hajji Hakimi, Sedarati and Hasan Rowhani.⁴⁰

The Political Agitator

In the political and Islamic circles of Mashhad during the oil nationalization movement and after the *coup* Shari'ati had gained a reputation for his familiarity with ideological, political and philosophical concepts. Even though he was looked upon more as a budding ideologue than a militant, he was not immune to the spirit of activism that had swept the country. Both before and after the *coup*, Shari'ati was involved in the clandestine propaganda activities of his political organization. Long after the sun had set and under the cover of the dark, along with Safavieh, his comrade-in-arms, Shari'ati regularly took to the streets of Mashhad, writing pro-Mosaddeq and anti-shah slogans on the walls and pasting the circulars and summons of *Jebheh-e Melli* (the National Front).⁴¹ Shari'ati and Safavieh started their nightly rounds at 1 am, and having successfully accomplished their mission, returned home by early dawn.⁴² Each time their slogans were white-washed by the army or covered by propaganda belonging to anti-Mosaddeqist political organizations or those loyal to the shah, they repeated their nocturnal ritual.

Shari'ati's missions were not always free of risk. Commemorating the first anniversary of the events of 30 Tir 1331, when the people ousted Qavam's government and brought Mosaddeq back to power, twenty one young political activists of the League and the Third Force are said to have cooperated to carry out a joint mission.⁴³ Their objective was to cover the walls of the city with pro-Mosaddeq slogans. The city was divided between seven groups each with three members. Two militants were supposed to keep watch at each end of the street while the third wrote out the slogans. The groups were scheduled to start their activities at 10 pm. Convinced that the use of two members as sentries was a waste of manpower and adamant on outdoing the others by writing on more walls, Shari'ati's group decided not to post guards. In the middle of the night and in the heat of writing it was surprised by a group of soldiers and arrested.⁴⁴ The next day it was forced to clean the walls by licking off its own graffiti. Two days later Shari'ati, whose tongue had swollen and turned black, was released.⁴⁵

On another occasion, Hejazi recalls that Shari'ati, who was at the time active in the National Resistance Movement, used his house, which was out of the city and less conspicuous, as the centre for a series of operations.⁴⁶ The main gate of the British consulate was set on fire as the result of these operations and a demonstration was staged at Mashhad's bazaar on the next day.

Whilst recounting his active involvement during this period, Shari'ati writes of an episode on 28 February 1954 when he and his friend Falsafi were arrested and imprisoned for seventeen days.⁴⁷ The anniversary of 9 Esfand was commemorated in an atmosphere of repression and fear since the *coup* against Mosaddeq had already taken place and Mosaddeqists had gone underground. According to Shari'ati, the preparation and organization of the commemoration ceremonies was assigned to him and Falsafi. Shari'ati tells us that they were arrested and imprisoned, yet does not say why or how. Of his friend Falsafi he says that they were classmates from the first grade until they graduated from high school. Falsafi is described not only as a close friend, classmate and comrade in arms, but as someone so close to Shari'ati that he felt as if they were 'one and the same'.⁴⁸ Shari'ati recounts how his friend Falsafi, who was interrogated first, heroically accepted all responsibilities for their political activities. Subsequently Shari'ati, who the authorities looked upon as a deluded young man, was jailed with common and not political prisoners. Confronted with Falsafi's act of sacrifice, he recounts how he became enraged with jealousy because his friend's gallantry had robbed him of all his valour and prowess.⁴⁹

The historical significance of this episode is probably of less value than the light that it sheds on Shari'ati's state of mind. It is not clear whether Falsafi is a real or fictional character. Those friends of Shari'ati who knew him from the first grade to the end of his secondary education and even attended the same university do not recall a common friend by this name. In Persian, Falsafi means philosophical and he could well be a fictional character Shari'ati created to represent his preoccupation at the time with philosophical issues and concerns. It is also possible that it is a fictional name for one of his many close friends. Furthermore, the episode that Shari'ati recounts leading to his imprisonment for seventeen days is once again not remembered by any of those many friends of his interviewed. The date of the event he recounts, however, coincides with the day on which the League became the Iranian Peoples' Party. This date was traditionally celebrated by the members or sympathizers of the IPP.

Once the husk of fantasy is sifted from the kernel of truth, Shari'ati's real motives in this account may become clear. The event he narrates seems to have served the purpose of underlining and emphasizing a single point. In the extract, which was written during 1968 when he was under considerable pressure by the SAVAK, and his revolutionary mettle was questioned in some quarters, Shari'ati may have wished to settle certain accounts with himself; to remind himself and maybe later his readers that he values nothing more in his life than his sense of righteousness. He argues that in life he does not see himself engaged in any kind of competition.⁵⁰

The only domain which arouses his sense of competitiveness and in which he will not allow anyone to surpass him is that of virtue. He is, he claims, unfamiliar with jealousy except when someone tries to outdo him in selflessness. Shari'ati envies himself as the one who should be 'martyred' and 'crucified' so that the people's original sin may be forgiven.⁵¹ He writes: 'No one can be more virtuous than I ... I should be sacrificed, I should be the one who sacrifices, I should be the martyr for my people ... I am Christ ... I am the Imam and not the caliph, I am the prophet not the king ... I am Ali, I will sacrifice myself, my family, my children and all my being at the alter of my faith and my love for your freedom, liberation, felicity and salvation.'⁵² The event of 9 Esfand seems to be a historical excuse for Shari'ati to reaffirm his fidelity to righteousness, selflessness and the struggle for freedom.

Although during this period Shari'ati was an active political cadre and agitator, his main concern and passion was that of writing. During the years 1951 to 1955, his works could be divided into three categories: his translations, his socio-political, theoretical and at times biographical articles in the prestigious daily newspaper of Khorasan and finally his poetry.

Translations

Back in 1948 at the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths, Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati had spoken fervently of the delightful style and enlightening content of a book called *Abu Zarr-e Qifari*. Authored by Abd al-Hamid Jowdat al-Sahar, a contemporary Egyptian writer, the book was in Arabic. Mohammad-Taqi's passionate praise for it, had led his friends to beg him for a translation. Mohammad-Taqi had promised to undertake the task and copies were even pre-sold and vouchers issued to an enthusiastic public.⁵³ Mohammad-Taqi's mounting responsibilities, however, left him with little time to work seriously on the book and his translation got no further than the introduction. In 1951 Ali, who was at the Teachers' Training College, read *Abu Zarr* and became very interested in translating it.⁵⁴ With the support of his father he began the project. Even though the text was called a translation, Ali openly admitted that he had freely added his own reflections, independent research and commentary to the basic text. Indeed Ali's interpolations were so extensive that it became impossible to distinguish between his own and Jowdat al-Sahar's ideas.⁵⁵

The text was ready for publication after the *coup* of 1953 and Ali's friends and political comrades set out to collect the necessary funds for its publication. They opened a small cooperative store from the proceeds of which they planned to publish the book. Even Ali himself was approached to buy shares in the cooperative, to which he is said to have responded, 'If you want to go bankrupt and the book never to see the light of day then take me as a partner and sell me a few shares!'⁵⁶ By the winter of 1954 some 17-1800 tomans had been collected.⁵⁷ The

first edition of the book was published in 1955 under the title of *Abu Zarr-e Qifari; Khoda-parast-e socialist*.

The purpose of the sub-title chosen for the book by Shari'ati was to present Abu Zarr as the perfect model of the God-Worshipping Socialists. As a member of the IPP, which considered itself imbued by the principles and ideals of the God-Worshipping Socialists, Shari'ati wished to present Abu Zarr as the personification of their ideology. It was during this period that he also formulated the concocted ideology of the 'Median School'. With an attractive ideology and a prodigious symbol such as Abu Zarr, Shari'ati was launching his idea of what a progressive Islamic movement should be.

In his introduction to the book, Shari'ati identified Abu Zarr as a 'perfect human being', an 'ultra socialist', a militant of 'Islamic communism' (*eshterakiyat-e eslami*) and one of those 'saviours of freedom who is sought by today's humanity'.⁵⁸ Appropriating the concept of socialism from the corpus of Western thought and civilization, he transformed it into a heritage of the Islamic tradition. The ideas of a social movement which is itself the product of the historical development of Europe are suddenly plucked from their socioeconomic context and pitched back into a historical time machine. This historical mutation is made possible by Shari'ati's attempt to define socialism by what Abu Zarr, who lived thirteen centuries ago, did. Shari'ati argues that 'if from each according to his ability and to each according to his work is the slogan of socialism', then Abu Zarr, constitutes the perfect embodiment of such a credo.⁵⁹ This is probably the first of Shari'ati's many ahistorical theoretical and conceptual usurptions and transformations in favour of an ideal Islam which he wishes to endow with all the socio-political virtues and accomplishments of mankind.

From what Abu Zarr may have been, Shari'ati the sculptor chisels out a hero, a role model and a symbol, who defies wealth, power and even religious authority to save the 'authentic' Islam of the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden. Abu Zarr, fictional or real, is the personification of the lone righteous rebel who confronts and challenges the canonical validity of the highest politico-religious authority in the Islamic empire. At a time when numerous Companions of the Prophet were all too busy enjoying their newly acquired wealth and power, a handful of honest Companions were politically marginalized and the rest were forced into acquiescence and the quiet of private prayers at home, in the name of the people, Abu Zarr challenges the injustices and wrongdoing committed by the third successor of the Prophet.

Shari'ati's Abu Zarr commands Osman to put an end to inequality and the concentration and polarization of wealth that had flourished during his reign. Abu Zarr pursues the egalitarian cause of Islam by preaching the words of God; 'And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the Way of Allah: announce unto them a most grievous penalty – On the Day when heat will be produced out of that (wealth) in the fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs – "This is the (treasure) which ye buried

for yourselves: taste ye, then the (treasures) ye buried.'"⁶⁰ According to Shari'ati, Abu Zarr promises to continue his campaign of forbidding evil until 'all wealth is equally divided among Muslims'.⁶¹ Shari'ati asserts that at a time when the fundamental principles of the Prophet; 'equality and fraternity' were being sacrificed, Abu Zarr defied the prevalent mood of resignation, sowed by the fear of the caliph, and raised the revolutionary and egalitarian banner of Islam.⁶²

Abu Zarr is Shari'ati's first symbolic creation, his first 'meaning sign' for those who later became members of the initiated circle around him and his works. Abu Zarr is the signal, code or allegory for the committed, defiant, revolutionary Muslim who preaches equality, fraternity, justice and liberation. Whether the book is a factual historical account of Abu Zarr's life is of secondary importance. As Abu Zarr's exemplary behaviour became the main ingredient of Shari'ati's most emotional, rhetorical and galvanizing speeches, facts seemed as insignificant details before the task of developing his socio-political discourse. They were, therefore, readily misused or even distorted for the sake of drawing the 'right' moral and political conclusions. Through the book on Abu Zarr, Shari'ati was giving a lesson in what he believed to be the proper Islamic conduct in an age of anti-values and anti-heroes. Furthermore, Shari'ati's discovery of Abu Zarr provided him with the opportunity to rupture the long believed firm link between western thought and progressive ideas. Shari'ati engaged in a revisionist genealogy of concepts and ideas. From this time on he sought to trace the lineage of concepts such as; social justice, fraternity, equality, liberation, and socialism, which had reached Iran through Western intellectual thought, to their Islamic origin. Shari'ati could, therefore, proudly claim that 'Abu Zarr is the forefather of all post French Revolution egalitarian schools'.⁶³ By arguing that all modern day ideals flowed from the rich Islamic-Iranian legacy, Shari'ati was hoping to free the Iranian intellectuals from what he believed to be their blind imitation of everything Western.

It is essentially through the understanding and adoption of Abu Zarr's world outlook and individual conduct that Shari'ati's endless streak of queries on the purpose and meaning of life and the significance of Islam as a social doctrine receives a satisfactory response. Abu Zarr's Islam, his ideology, preferences, biases, dogmas, conduct and even temperament becomes Shari'ati's life-long compass and model in life. Religion is understood as a factory which produces 'real human beings', and Abu Zarr is identified as the 'perfect human being' or the supreme product of this factory, since he is both a monotheist and a socialist.⁶⁴ In Abu Zarr's Islam or the Islam that he had bestowed upon Abu Zarr, Shari'ati uncovered an epistemological medium of recognizing and defining the ideal life and society. Furthermore, he had identified the ideal role model for attaining the ideal Islamic society in the character of Abu Zarr.

It would be fair to say that from the age of eighteen until his death, Shari'ati's youthful hero-worship of Abu Zarr developed into a deeply felt reverence. He thus tried to remain as sincere as he could to the image of Abu Zarr, as he had outlined in his book: the righteous and responsible Muslim who resisted all deviations from

the egalitarian and fraternal Islam of the Prophet. Later in his life, Shari'ati openly admitted that he was a follower of Abu Zarr and that his Islam, Shi'ism, ideals, wants and even rage, were those of Abu Zarr.⁶⁵ Shari'ati felt so close to Abu Zarr that he felt himself something close to his reincarnation. This became a particular feature of Shari'ati's behaviour that recurred in relation to different people living in different epochs. For example, Shari'ati described himself, his position and situation in life in terms similar to those which he had employed in describing Abu Zarr.⁶⁶

Shari'ati's Islam was so closely associated with that of Abu Zarr's that when in the early 1970s in response to Shari'ati's sharp criticism of the clergy as the custodians of oppression and exploitation his clerical enemies tried to discredit him, they attacked Abu Zarr. Hajj Ashraf Kashani, a prominent Tehran preacher, sermoned that Abu Zarr was a common thief, who turned to Islam only after it had become widespread and challenged Osman, simply because he too wanted a share of the wealth that Osman was distributing among his friends.⁶⁷ After Shari'ati's death, many called him 'the Abu Zarr of his time'.⁶⁸ What the Prophet was supposed to have said about Abu Zarr, was repeated by Shari'ati's supporters in Iran in reference to him; 'He lives alone, he dies alone and he shall be resurrected alone'.⁶⁹

For his second translation, Shari'ati introduced another radical Islamic figure. The vice-president of the 'American Friends of the Middle-East' had, on 15 March 1954 invited Mohammad-Hossein Kashef al-Ghita to attend a joint Christian-Muslim Congress held on 22 April at Behamdoon in Lebanon. Dignitaries of both faiths had been asked to discuss the common moral and ethical virtues of their religions, address the danger of communism, and finally hammer out a common strategy to combat its spread. In response to this invitation, Kashef al-Ghita wrote a fiery letter which came to be known as 'Nemunchha-ye ali-ye akhlaqi dar Eslam ast na dar Behamdoon' or 'Archetypal values are to be found in Islam and not at Behamdoon'.

In his letter, which Shari'ati translated in the summer of 1954, Kashef al-Ghita thundered at the wrong done to the Islamic world by the Western powers, lamented the Islamic world's quietism and unIslamic practices and deplored its collaboration with the Western countries at a time when the West had plucked Palestine from it and given it to Israel. In the end he declined the invitation. In his introduction to the letter, Shari'ati describes Kashef al-Ghita as 'a great hero' and 'an illustrious cleric, mufti and source of imitation'.⁷⁰ In the same acclamatory vein that he had written about Abu Zarr, he describes Kashef al-Ghita as 'an exalted genius and a saviour of the masses'.⁷¹ Evoking the rebellious behaviour of Abu Zarr, he eulogizes Kashef al-Ghita for his outspokenness on the predicament and plight of Muslims, his vocal opposition to the national and international policies and practices of traditional European colonialists and the emerging US imperialists.

In Kashef al-Ghita, Shari'ati had found yet another notable Islamic figure conscious of the fact that Islam was a double-edged sword. While it could provide the

theoretical basis of an anti-colonialist, anti-exploitative and anti-despotic discourse and movement it could also be misused and manipulated to justify despotic rule, colonialism and exploitation. In his report on the absence of Islamic values, Kashef al-Ghita described how King Faisal had deformed and disfigured Islam in the name of Islam. This process of inversion or turning Islam inside out which is figuratively referred to as Islam which wears its sheep's wool coat inside out, left a deep impression on the young Shari'ati.⁷² His well known concepts of polytheistic and monotheistic Islam are the logical outcomes of this inversion process.

Shari'ati identified with Kashef al-Ghita's radical and politically-engaged Islam and appreciated his method of stirring Muslims against injustices committed against them by arousing their sense of dignity. Kashef al-Ghita tried to shake Muslims out of their slumber by telling them that Islam considered quietism and passive submission to the oppressor as complicity with the enemy.⁷³ Kashef al-Ghita's contention that 'the right kind of democracy, true freedom and just communism could only be found in the life of Mohammad and his illustrious heirs'⁷⁴ coincided with Shari'ati's idea of appropriating all Western social virtues in favour of Islam. As if echoing Shari'ati's own position, Kashef al-Ghita maintained that lofty ethical ideals could be found neither in the East nor the West but only in Islam and the path of the Prophet.⁷⁵

Just as Shari'ati was finishing the translation of Kashef al-Ghita's letter, news of his sudden death in Baghdad reached Mashhad. The socio-political message of the letter was extremely pertinent in the post-coup political climate of Iran. In his letter, Kashef al-Ghita had referred to the events in Iran and had directly accused the Western powers of shedding the blood of the Iranian people.⁷⁶ He had openly invited all Muslims to resist and challenge Western political, economic and cultural incursions until their countries were free from such influences and interventions. To repel Western influence and reinstate Islamic values, the letter called for civil disobedience, outright armed struggle and revolution against those regimes subservient to Western interests.⁷⁷ Judging the letter as highly suitable for publication and distribution in Iran, the Mashhad branch of the National Resistance Movement took full responsibility for its clandestine reproduction and dissemination.⁷⁸ By autumn of 1954 the letter was widely distributed in Mashhad's political circles.

The Median School of Islam

On 25 November 1954, the first of a series of articles called 'Maktab-e Vasete-e Eslam' ('The Median School of Islam') was published in Mashhad's prestigious daily, *Khorasan*. The article was printed on the first page accompanied by a map of North Africa, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan on which it was written 'Maktab-e Vasete' ('Median school'). On the map, the Median school countries were surrounded from the East by a land mass on which was written communism,

and from the West by another land mass with capitalism written across it. The article was penned by one Ali Shari'ati.⁷⁹ For ten weeks, Ali Shari'ati articulated his idea of the Median School of Islam in articles published usually on the first page of every Monday edition of *Khorasan*.⁸⁰

In his first article Shari'ati explained the purpose of his discourse. He argued that the Iranian people were suffering from spiritual poverty, which he deemed to be the source of their 'misfortunes, disagreements and underdevelopment'. Arguing that the 'flames of faith have died in the hearts of the youth and the Islam which the elders embrace contains but only a few aspects of the truth,' Shari'ati underlined the necessity of formulating an appropriate and viable system of thought or school of belief.⁸¹ In his second article, he set out to delineate its principles.⁸² The Median School of Islam, he argued, was philosophically situated between materialism and idealism, socially situated between capitalism and communism and politically situated between the Eastern and Western blocs. He argued that the Islamic countries could and should form an independent Median bloc. The dual purpose of the Median bloc would be to act as a buffer between the two traditional blocs and thereby reduce the tension between them and resist the wanton interventions of these blocs in the affairs of Islamic countries.⁸³

The remaining articles dealt with the topics of materialism, dialectics and historical materialism. The historical roots, development and the principles of materialism were discussed in three articles.⁸⁴ The topic of dialectics, its roots, its methodology, Hegel's contributions and Marx's development and use of this concept were discussed in three other articles.⁸⁵ In the ninth article addressing the topic of historical materialism, Shari'ati once again employed his method of substituting Western achievements with its Eastern quasi-analogue. He argued that 'even though today it seems as if the scientific analysis of historical events was initiated by contemporary European historians, it must be admitted that the first steps in this path were taken by Muslims and the introduction to history by Ibn Khalkhan is a proof of this contention.'⁸⁶ Shari'ati probably felt that this provocative approach was necessary, especially after the *coup*, to break the vicious circle of underachievement and political failure which led to a loss of faith in one's own identity and culture, subsequently giving way to blind faith in the ways of the Westerners and therefore their imitation. In Shari'ati's opinion this vicious circle aggravated the peoples' feeling of inferiority and dependence in relation to Westerners.

The main idea developed in these series of articles was that of Islam as a viable third way. The series was an attempt at delineating a way of thought and a social organization distinct from those derived from prevalent economic systems and philosophical schools of thought. This home-made ideology gave the young Shari'ati visibility and recognition. To his enthusiastic audience it seemed as if he had paved the way for an independent and endogenous school of thought firmly rooted in the tradition of Islam. By July 1955, Shari'ati expressed the same core ideas in a pamphlet called *Tarikh-e Takammol-e Falsafeh* (The History of the De-

velopment of Philosophy).⁸⁷ Reflecting the ideas of the God-Worshipping Socialists, Shari'ati identified the economic system of the Median school as that of scientific socialism based on monotheism.⁸⁸ At the time Shari'ati's pamphlet became very popular among intellectuals in Mashhad and people having read it passed it on to their friends.⁸⁹

It is said that prior to its publication in *Khorasan*, Shari'ati had developed his idea of the Median School of Islam in the process of a series of lectures that he was asked to give. These weekly lectures were organized after the 1953 *coup* and were attended by a circle of old friends, all of whom had also been members of the League for the Freedom of the Iranian People. Members of this group were Hossein Mozafari, Mehdi Mozafari, Reza Ra'isi, Ali Espahbodi, Khalil Reza'i, Taqi Dadsetan and Fazlinejad. This secret group considered itself a sub-committee of the Central Committee of the National Front in Mashhad.⁹⁰ Even though Ali was not a member of the Central Committee or the sub-committee, he was regularly invited to address this small group on ideology. In his lectures and formulations he made critical and analytical use of the existing philosophical schools.⁹¹ Fazlinejad, the coordinator of this committee remembers that it was basically the contents of Ali's lectures at these meetings that was later published as the Median school of Islam.⁹² Jalaeddin Farsi recalls that what was later published as the Median school was originally discussed at the student's cell of the NRM in Mashhad, which Ali himself founded and presided.⁹³ It is most probable that Ali was discussing the idea of the Median school at both gatherings. However, the supposition that these ideas were originally developed by him is at best suspect.

As already mentioned, back in December 1950, more than four years before the publication of Shari'ati's article, 'The Median School of Islam' in *Khorasan*, Abolqasem Shakibnia had expressed exactly the same ideas in the journal *Nameh-e Forugh Elm*. Shakibnia later, in June 1953, elaborated his previous ideas in an article called the 'Median School' (Maktab-e Vaseteh) published in the first issue of *Ganj-e Shayegan*.⁹⁴ The last of these articles on the 'Median School of Islam' and the 'Median Bloc' appeared some sixteen months before Shari'ati's first article on the same theme. Just as Shari'ati's first article was supplemented with a map of the Median Bloc countries, when Razavi's first article appeared eighteen months before Shari'ati's it too was complemented by a map of Africa, Southern Europe, the Middle and Far East. On the map, the North African countries, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, the southern republics of the Soviet Union and Afghanistan (the Median Bloc countries) were all highlighted. On the bottom left hand corner of the map, a small hand written caption read, 'The Median Bloc; the base for global transfiguration'.⁹⁵

It would be unreasonable to assume that all these similarities in the choice of theme, concepts, terms, arguments, and even supplementary maps, were coincidental. *Nameh-e Forugh-e Elm* was a platform for all modernist Islamic intellectuals. It was conscientiously read by sympathizers or members of the Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists and Nakhshab himself contributed to it. Other contributors

included Gholamreza Sa'edi, Mehdi Bazargan and Mahmud Taleqani, whose article on 'Islam and Property' first appeared in this journal. As the journal of the Islamic Students' Association of Tehran University, a journal which counted Bazargan, Sahabi and Mo'infar among its authors, *Ganj-e Shayegan* was equally well known among Islamic modernists and intellectuals. These two journals were, at the time, among the most important Islamic modernist publications. It is almost certain, therefore, that Shari'ati had read the articles in *Ganj-e Shayegan* if not Shakibnia's first article in *Nameh-e Forugh-e Elm* and had been highly influenced by them.

By 1992, Shakibnia was not aware of the fact that, inspired by his and Razavi's writings, Shari'ati had published the Median school concept in *Khorasan* without any reference to them. Before being informed of this fact, he recalled that on one of the few occasions that he had met Shari'ati, he was puzzled, embarrassed and flattered by Shari'ati's remark to him that; 'I am indebted to you for I have learnt a lot from you.'⁹⁶ As much as this statement may have, at the time, appeared simply courteous and humble, in retrospect, Shari'ati had good reason to have honestly meant what he said to Shakibnia.

Khorasan

The success of Shari'ati's articles on the Median School in *Khorasan* paved the way for greater literary involvement with the newspaper. From 25 February 1955 he published a series of articles on 'notable international figures'. The men reviewed in this series could be considered as Shari'ati's intellectual gurus during his youth and in his future works a multitude of references can be found to most of them. In a way he identified with them all. As disparate as some of these figures were, certain common traits could be distinguished in them. Each man was grappling with a cognitive or epistemological problem, some individual, some social. Each called for some sort of soul searching. The mental and psychological strains and trials of some brought them close to insanity. In each case, they seemed to have a solution for some problematic aspect of life based on a non-dogmatic view of religion. In the majority of cases, Shari'ati introduced personalities of different religions who tried to reconcile scientific rationality and modernity with the belief in God. Shari'ati's preoccupation with the three issues – the meaning of life, the individual's relationship to himself and God, and the nature of the ideal socio-political system, is also discernable in the articles.

The first of the series was on Seyyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi.⁹⁷ The article was unsigned, although its style resembles Shari'ati's. Even more striking it was accompanied by a drawing of Seyyed Jamal al-Din. Given the pattern of Shari'ati's later, signed contributions to the series and interestingly his drawings of the characters that he wrote about, it would be safe to say that the launching of these series in the newspaper was his idea, that the first article was written by him and that the

drawing of Seyyed Jamal al-Din was also his.

A week later the second article, 'Freud the founder of the school of love' appeared. This time, Ali Shari'ati's name graced the by-line and even the accompanying portrait of Freud's face had his signature on it.⁹⁸ Shari'ati summed up his assessment of Freud with a very positive remark, unexpected even from a modernist Islamic intellectual: 'Even if we were to accept the criticism of Freud's opponents,' he wrote, 'we would be compelled to consider him a great man since he guided human beings to the depths of their psyche.'⁹⁹

The third article, on Doctor Alexis Carrel was also signed by Shari'ati.¹⁰⁰ Carrel was one of those figures who left a long-lasting impression on Shari'ati. His scientific achievements as the 1912 Nobel Prize winner in medicine combined with his belief in metaphysical powers demonstrated the compatibility of scientific thought with faith in God. In his article, after praising Carrel for his foresight on the dismal future of a soulless Western society completely mesmerized by materialism, Shari'ati repeated Carrel's warning that unless a 'rational' solution is found, 'humanity will be faced with an ominous and deleterious lot.' To all those who wished to appreciate the real value of Islam's noble tenets, Shari'ati strongly recommended two of Carrel's books, *Man the Unknown* and *Reflections on Life*, both of which had been translated into Persian. Soon after his arrival in Paris Shari'ati translated Carrel's article called 'Prayers' which had first appeared in the Readers' Digest.

The article on Maurice Maeterlinck by Shari'ati also came with a drawing. The image that Shari'ati presents here of Maeterlinck is that of a European gnostic. The greatest contribution of Maeterlinck, according to Shari'ati, was that he raised essential cognitive questions such as 'what is the purpose of creation and the object of life?'¹⁰¹ Shari'ati rhetorically acknowledged that to pose such essential questions was not acceptable in Islam, which believes that 'problems outweighing the intellectual capacity of human beings would be incomprehensible to them.' As if hiding behind Maeterlinck's authority, the young Shari'ati drew an implicit parallel between Christian priests and Islamic clerics and explained how Maeterlinck was opposed to the superstitious beliefs of Christian priests. In conclusion, Shari'ati argued that all human beings have a permanent link or tie with God, a link which exists during and after life on earth. This position, he attributed to Maeterlinck.

Mohammad Eqbal, who Shari'ati called a 'perfect human being' was his next subject.¹⁰² Shari'ati admired the way Eqbal had learnt from European philosophy and returned to India to formulate a solution for its problems based on the Qur'an. Eqbal is credited for his reconciliation of the dispute between the proponents of rationalism and love and acknowledged for having conceived a 'median school' between capitalism and communism. He also elaborated on two important ideas he ascribed to Eqbal: first, that a social revolution is impossible without an 'intellectual transformation' and the consequent need for an appropriate Islamic doctrine; second, a deeply-felt sense of respect and admiration for Sufism, along with an equally strong sense of repulsion for the feeling of resignation, isolation and fatalism that it engendered.

In his last article, Shari'ati introduced a lesser known figure, Evariste Galois who was born in 1811.¹⁰³ This article was also accompanied by a drawing of Galois by Shari'ati. He introduced the French mathematician as a rebellious and non-studious child whose contributions to mathematics did not become known until after his death. He wrote that Galois could not bear the shame of witnessing the poverty, hardship and destitution around him and succumbed to a voice that invited him to commit suicide. Shari'ati wrote that 'Galois made a bold decision and took away his own life' at the age of twenty. The fact of the matter, however, is that Galois was killed in a duel. Shari'ati does not mention this and chooses to call his article; 'The saddest scene in the history of science or the suicide of Galois.'¹⁰⁴ Even if he wished to suggest that Galois provoked the duel and it could therefore be indirectly construed as a suicide, he does not say as much. He chose to substitute fiction for fact because, apparently, the drama of a suicide by a socially conscious mathematical genius was, it appears, more shocking to him than a duel.

It is interesting to note that articles on and by Eqbal and on Seyyed Jamal al-Din had appeared in the same issues of *Forugh-e Elm* and *Ganj-e Shayegan* which included the core articles on the Median school of Islam, which Shari'ati had almost certainly read carefully before writing his article.¹⁰⁵ Bazargan, whose interest in Carrel precedes that of Shari'ati, also refers to Aleqis (*sic*) Carrel in one of his articles in *Ganj-e Shayegan*.¹⁰⁶ These recurrences could be coincidental, but I believe that Shari'ati's choice of figures was greatly influenced by the modernist Islamic line of thought that prevailed in both these journals.

Between April and September of 1955, Shari'ati's penmanship came to dominate *Khorasan*. During this period he spent a considerable amount of time at the newspaper and Delasa'i recalls that its office had gradually become the main hang-out of Ali's friends.¹⁰⁷ In a number of issues Shari'ati's contribution appeared both in prose and poetry. As he gained greater visibility and popularity he was, a friend recalls, invited to the office of the provincial governor and, at a meeting with officials, invited to write articles on religious topics for other dailies and to prepare religious programmes for Mashhad's radio.¹⁰⁸ Shari'ati is said to have responded that he was incapable of writing on 'an American brand of Islam' (*Eslam-e Amrika'i*). Questioned on what he meant by this he is reported to have said that it referred to an Islam that was concerned only with the fine points and details of rites and rituals. Shari'ati had added: 'Even though I have read, memorized and taught these details to my students on numerous occasions, their content always eludes me.'¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, from the end of May 1955, while working at *Khorasan*, Shari'ati went on the air – indeed he refers to his twice weekly programme in a letter to his cousin Asghar.¹¹⁰ On Tuesday afternoons he had a literary programme from five thirty in the afternoon and on Fridays he participated in the special weekend programmes of Mashhad radio.

His writings in *Khorasan*, some of which were lead articles, included an analyses of the special spirit of the Iranian people, a short history of Nowruz, the causes of Iran's decline and the reasons why Iranian youth strayed. Their recurring theme

is a eulogy of Iranians, Iran's glorious past and its historical ability to resist foreign invasions. As if still outraged by the foreign-orchestrated *coup* against Mosaddeq, in all these articles Shari'ati lashed out at all foreign invaders. 'This people has always resisted its enemies, even when it lost its physical power to conduct an armed resistance.'¹¹¹ He argued that the purpose of 'colonial intrusions' was 'to destroy Iran's national identity, its religion and its spirits.' He therefore pinned his hopes on the 'Iranian spirit of resistance' to guarantee the country's sovereignty and independence.¹¹² Demonstrating Shari'ati's pronounced sense of nationalism, these articles sought to reinvigorate a feeling of national pride among his readers.

One of the causes of Iran's decline was the Mongol invasion, which, according to Shari'ati induced a sense of withdrawal from material life and encouraged the pursuit of spiritualism reflected in metaphysical Sufi quests.¹¹³ The inroad made by Western thought and ideas, was another reason for Iran's demise. Shari'ati argues that foreigners led us to replace our own 'pure and fulfilling Islamic beliefs with absurdities such as materialism, capitalism, nationalism and communism.' These concepts he opined 'penetrated deep into our hearts and minds and polluted our society.'¹¹⁴ In conclusion, he maintains that only the propagation of Islamic truths could counter the impact of foreign ideas.¹¹⁵ In his article on Nowruz, Shari'ati even condemns the Arab conquest writing, 'Nowruz is perhaps the only relic of our glorious and powerful past that has survived the obliterating Arab invasion.'¹¹⁶

As a social critic, Shari'ati wielded his pen whenever he felt that a wrong had to be corrected. In a lead article he attacked the Iranian educational system.¹¹⁷ The fact that he was a teacher employed by the Ministry of Education, probably induced him to be cautious. For the first time he used the pen name Sham' (candle) which later in France became his regular trademark. Reflecting on his experience of sitting the twelfth grade comprehensive exams and his experience as a teacher, Shari'ati criticizes the manner in which students throughout their course work had to learn everything by rote. The worst part of the educational experience, however, was the end of the year examination system which expected students to parrot all that they had memorized throughout the year. This absurd system, he argued, led to numerous failures. Instead of allowing 'each to progress according to their own capacity and ability,' such a method brought the depression and eventual suicide of certain students. In another lead article, Shari'ati lamented the fact that shallow and trashy literature was selling extremely well in Iran, while thoughtful and sophisticated literary journals such as *Yaghma* could hardly sell a thousand copies.¹¹⁸ He also chided the country's renowned literary figures for 'withdrawing from the cultural arena' and leaving the field to a few newcomers.

Two of Shari'ati's poems were also published in *Khorasan*: 'Morgh-e abshar' ('The bird of the waterfall') and 'Yek negah' ('A glance').¹¹⁹ In a literary piece, which could have been a reflection of his state of mind during this period, written under his pen name Sham', he praised and glorified death. Grieving the pain and hardship that he endured by 'witnessing the ugly and defiled scenes that surrounded

him, Shari'ati pleaded for death. He claimed that, incapable of 'limiting the treacherous' acts committed around him, he could at least find eternal peace in death.¹²⁰ As Shari'ati's spirit and mood ebbed and flowed, the message of his articles vacillated between optimistic invitations to resistance and pessimistic impotence and resignation.

After about nine months of systematic contributions to *Khorasan*, Shari'ati's writings came to a halt on 25 August 1955. Some three months later, on 3 December 1955, he attended his first class at the newly-inaugurated Faculty of Literature of the University of Mashhad. A picture of this first class appeared in *Khorasan*.¹²¹

The University Years

'I realized that this road does not lead anywhere'

The Faculty of Literature was formally inaugurated in Mashhad on 15 September 1955, but did not hold classes until later. Ali Akbar Fayyaz, a reputable professor from Tehran University, was appointed dean and sent to Mashhad, his home town, to found the Faculty, which after the Faculty of Medicine became the second centre of higher education in Mashhad. Fayyaz, who had the Herculean task of transforming a project on paper into an actually-functioning entity, managed to hold the first classes of the newly born Faculty on 3 December 1955. On 15 August 1956 the University of Mashhad formally came into existence, incorporating the two previously established faculties. Fayyaz was able to get the project off the ground in a very short time because he had been a student at seminary school and was closely acquainted with Mashhad's traditional literary circles. A number of the professors he hired had only a traditional seminary school education. It is said that Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati was initially among those invited to teach (in his case Arabic language and literature), but that he declined because of the likelihood that unveiled women would attend his classes.¹ Mohammad-Taqi and Ayatollah Milani were both said to be in principle averse to the idea of the Faculty of Literature, since it would imply coeducational classes.² Four years later, in 1959, Mohammad-Taqi started to teach Qur'anic exegeses (*tafsir*) at the Faculty of Theology where the classes were, presumably, all male.

Ali Shari'ati was a member of the first incoming class, composed of some twenty-four students, one of whom was a cleric. Women made up one third of the class. At first, under the influence of their religious backgrounds, most of the students chose segregated seating with the women in the front rows and the men at the back. At the time, the Faculty only awarded a single degree in Persian Literature. All students had to take courses in the History of Literature taught by Yusefi; Persian and Arabic Literature taught by Abolqasem Habibollahi (Navid); Logic, Classical Persian texts and Arabic taught by Seyyed Ahmad Khorasani; French language and literature taught by Zatalian; Persian Literature and Arabic taught by Valiollah Shahab Ferdows and Persian literature and the History of Islam taught by Fayyaz himself.

Ali Shari'ati was not the typical high school graduate entering university. At

the time he was twenty-two and had been a primary school teacher for three years. He had been actively involved in party politics, had gained some reputation as an ardent Mosaddeqist, and was already well known in intellectual and modernist Islamic circles for his translations of Kashef al-Ghita's letter and Abu Zarr. His contributions to the daily *Khorasan* had launched him as an aspiring intellectual star, though at the provincial rather than national level. His articles had also given him considerable visibility as an up and coming social critic, theoretician-cum-ideologue and a sentimentally romantic poet. Finally Ali was Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati's only son. Mohammad-Taqi himself inspired respect as a teacher, religious figure and a political activist. Shari'ati's rich background thus set him apart from his peers at the university.

Even though Ali was enrolled at the university as a full-time student, he continued to work full-time as a teacher at the Ketabpur primary school. Constantly commuting on his old bicycle between his Mashhad and his Ahmadabad classes was not easy. Shari'ati, like all other students holding a full-time job before entering the university, was told to resign in order to study full-time. The authorities argued that part-time students who held a job, especially as teachers, would be unable to attend classes regularly and threatened that excessive absences would automatically disqualify them from taking their exams. The choice was clear: either teaching or studying. Defying the prevalent rules, Ali tried to do both jobs and became neither a regular student nor a regular and punctual teacher. His absences from class, his subsequent exclusion from exams and his pleas to be allowed to sit for them became a regular pattern. Even though he seemed to get around all his teachers, Ahmadzadeh the registrar at the university always gave him a hard time. On the grounds of too many absences, which disqualified him from graduation, Ahmadzadeh even stalled the final issuance of Ali's degree for a couple of months.³ Despite all the practical and legal problems, Shari'ati succeeded in both holding down his job and completing university.

Political Discontent

Ali's first year at the Faculty of Literature coincided with his estrangement from political activity and a cooling of relations with his friends at the Iranian Peoples' Party. In a revealing letter addressed to 'my dear brothers,' written at about the time he entered the Faculty of Literature, he explained his reasons for terminating his clandestine cooperation.⁴ Even though he did not mention any particular names in it, the letter was written to and handed to his colleagues at the IPP. Shari'ati's arguments revolved around two major axes. First, there seems to have been a personality clash with his comrades. In response to the apparent accusations of some of his political friends against him, he retorted rhetorically that 'the continued cooperation of a selfish and dubious character who wishes to monopolize everything will only lead to the corruption of his colleagues.'⁵ Second, criticizing his

friends and their political activities, he wrote, 'the nationalist forces (*melliyan*) do not possess the solidarity and unity which, according to politicians, guarantees victory and they do not think in terms of the long-run which is necessary for [the success of] clandestine struggles.'⁶ Shari'ati, however, added that if the mutual sense of 'sincerity and good faith' which once existed between him and his colleagues had continued to prevail, he would have been able to live with the tactical political problems and would have continued his cooperation.⁷

The last page of the letter is entirely devoted to a narrative on his acute melancholic state of mind which he presented as the underlying reason for his inability to remain with the party. In his typically caustic style, he wrote, 'how can a sick, mad, insane and dejected (*panchar*) person maintain the permanent struggle and "fight against red, green, purple, violet, maroon and grey imperialism in the midst of fire and blood?"'⁸ Lamenting his utterly bleak mood, he wrote that he could only think of two things: 'to either free myself from this world or to free myself from this country.'⁹ The wording of the fourth page of his letter describing his depressed mental state closely resembles the wording of his piece 'Let me Die,' published in *Khorasan*. Having sketched a ghastly picture of life, Shari'ati eulogized death and longed for it by suicide.

As if writing his final testament before drifting away into the unknown, in the last few lines of his letter Shari'ati's tone became that of a compassionate and valiant, yet worn out, comrade-in-arms. To his old political friends he wrote; 'I will take God as my witness that wherever I may be and however I may be I will be proud of your friendship and association. Your purity and free-spiritedness would always inspire me with hope.'¹⁰ He concluded, 'I also pray God that if at this time I cannot do anything for my beliefs, [He would watch over me so that] I would not commit treacherous acts, thus remaining faithful to freedom, honour and purity ... while seeking obscurity.'¹¹

Some of Shari'ati's political friends at the time maintain that his response in the letter was directed at their comments about his lack of punctuality and organizational discipline, which they believed was required in a clandestine party. Complaints about Shari'ati's lack of discipline were, however, neither novel, unexpected or scandalous. This was a fact entirely accepted by him. Shari'ati's resignation must have, therefore, been for other reasons. Perhaps he was hurt by charges similar to those he mentions in his letter. If there were such charges, they were not made by his close group of old friends in the party. Jala'eddin Farsi, who was not a member of the Iranian Peoples' Party, nor a close friend, yet was acquainted with Shari'ati and went to the Faculty of Literature at the same time as him, recalls that 'Shari'ati turned his back on a small political organization which did not have the capacity to absorb his lofty ideas and aspirations and having criticized it, he left.'¹² Farsi reports that, after his departure, Shari'ati's political friends accused him of 'becoming a Sufi and abandoning the cause of political struggle.'¹³ This line of criticism is said to have continued against Shari'ati even in Paris.

One obvious cause of his resignation, to which he explicitly referred, was his

depression which could have led to his feeling of rejection. The accusations against him may have therefore been the mole hill out of which Shari'ati could create a mountain and subsequently use as an excuse to terminate his political activities and ties. It is clear from the tone of the letter that he had grown excessively weary of political engagement, especially its organized form. It therefore seems as if he opted for self-imposed seclusion and isolation. It is with this excessively despairing and isolationist frame of mind that Shari'ati entered the Faculty of Literature. Here, although he was in the public eye of the students, Shari'ati seems to have yearned for his introverted solitude.

Later, in his interrogations, Shari'ati alluded to the reasons why he had put an end to his political collaboration with the IPP, without naming the party.¹⁴ Some of these were similar to the issues he had raised in his letter of resignation. First, Shari'ati argued that for he and his colleagues, who were familiar public figures, it was impossible to remain clandestine in Mashhad. Second, he maintained that the leaders of his organization lacked any training or knowledge of conducting political struggle under clandestine conditions. These two shortcomings, he believed, could compromise the safety of members and put an abrupt and unfortunate end to all their efforts. Finally, Shari'ati argued that something more than a common past was necessary for the success of a political organization. He posited that a political organization had to be based on a doctrine and since his organization lacked this fundamental prerequisite, he became sceptical of its usefulness.

New Sparks, Friends and Teachers

In his first literature class, Professor Habibollahi, who was familiar with Ali's works, introduced him to his classmates as a promising literary figure. Puran Shari'at-Razavi, remembers how, on that occasion, she was impressed by her professor's kind praise of the shy young man who was too embarrassed to take his eyes off the ground. Even though Ali attended many classes during his three years at the University of Mashhad and was exposed to the teaching of many professors, there was only one Seyyed Ahmad Khorasani who had a lasting influence on him in more than one way.

Khorasani was a maverick, a libertarian and an iconoclast. He had studied at the seminary to become a cleric. During the reign of Reza Shah it is said that he was compelled to choose another profession. So, as was customary with many who had had a traditional seminary education, Khorasani entered the Ministry of Education to become a teacher. Before moving to Mashhad he is reported to have lived in Isfahan, where his house was set on fire because of his anti-religious statements.¹⁵ At the time when Fayyaz was the principal of Shah Reza High school in Mashhad, Khorasani was the school's supervisor. He was constantly at loggerheads with established institutions and their members, engaging in disputes with both clerics and respectable figures of the literary world. He considered himself an

authority on Persian grammar and a connoisseur of classical Persian texts. Khorasani's position on common syntactical mistakes in Persian was just as unconventional as his religious ideas. Often accused of being a Kasravist and a disbeliever, the fact that he had joined the Society of the Partisans of Peace, an intellectual and cultural front for the Tudeh party, made him more enigmatic in the conservative climate of Mashhad. Yet he too was one of the many socially-conscious non-communist radicals who had joined this Society. Later he even went to China.

Khorasani was highly regarded by some and frowned upon by other students. His classes, however, were very engaging. For some he was a free thinker and for others a Kasravist deviationist. Once, in an Arabic class, he is said to have gone on a tangent and declared that 'religions are barriers to the progress of humanity and their elimination would accelerate our development.'¹⁶ In the religious climate of Mashhad and with the presence of religiously-oriented students, such a bold comment could not have gone by unchallenged. A group of students including Razmju, Hedayatzadeh, Asgari and Alizadeh, who was a cleric, protested and demanded further explanations and clarifications. The heated episode ended with an official students' complaint to Fayyaz and a warning to Khorasani. In such sensitive debates over religious issues, surprisingly enough, Ali Shari'ati never took sides with the contesting students against Khorasani's compromising comments on religious matters.¹⁷ On the contrary, he was greatly influenced by Khorasani's emphasis on independent and critical thought and his openness, inquisitiveness and sense of scepticism. His pedagogical style and method impressed Shari'ati to the extent that traces of it could be found in Shari'ati's own way of teaching once he returned to Mashhad University as a professor. Khorasani, for example, allowed his students to bring in and consult all the reference books they needed during the exam because he did not believe in memorization. He would quip to his students that, 'you ought to learn something that is not found in your books.'¹⁸ The encounter with Khorasani at the time had a formative impact on Shari'ati.¹⁹

Later Shari'ati reminisced about his classes with Khorasani. On reading his accounts, it is evident that Khorasani had a friendly rapport with his student, who was going through one of his philosophically speculative moods. Alluding to Ali's constant daydreaming and absent-mindedness in class, Khorasani regularly joked about how he would leave his body in class and his mind and spirit would float away into the unknown.²⁰ Once, Khorasani asked him: 'Who do you go to and who is this person who seems to be better than us?'²¹ In jest, Khorasani had suggested opening a new column in his attendance book, in front of Ali's name, explaining whether it was really Ali who was present or merely his body.²² Shari'ati recalled that as a result of Khorasani's jokes his classmates teased him, commenting on his regular state of flux; his coming and going, presence and absence.

At the university, Ali mingled and socialized with his classmates some of whom he already knew. During breaks between classes, students usually gathered in the small cafeteria located in the cellar. Over a tumbler of tea, they exchanged opinions,

discussed what they had studied in class, read poetry and spoke about their teachers. Ali was usually the centre of attention. Whether he told jokes, pulled someone's leg, discussed Persian literature or answered serious questions about existence, logic or philosophy, he always seemed to attract his peers. In debates, it was Ali who had the final word. He was not only cordial but knew how to deal with people individually. His peers felt close to him, each on a particular and probably different account. One of his close friends during these years recalled that it was normal for students to get offended by or indignant at other students over trivial issues, yet even during or after a serious debate, Ali always managed not to offend anyone.²³ Whenever students gossiped or tattled about others, Ali kept silent, smiled and rubbed his fingers on his long forehead. His gentle smile, aptly dubbed a 'Buddha's smile', became his trade-mark. He is said to have worn it whenever he wanted to be left out of a discussion.²⁴ His jovial appearance, however, disguised his persistent inner feelings of melancholy. The fact that he had to wear a different mask for different occasions clearly bothered him. It was not until 1958 that he directly addressed his own multiple personality and his quest for discovering his own true identity in an essay that was published under the title, 'Who am I?'²⁵

In his selection of intimate friends, Ali gravitated away from the crowd he knew before. He continued to frequent them, but the tempo decreased. Fakhreddin Hejazi, who was not one of Ali's old political friends but had become close to him after the 1953 coup and had later entered the Faculty of Literature, recalls that even though Ali continued to see him during his first year at the university, he was gradually becoming 'removed and distant'.²⁶

At university Ali befriended Yadollah Qara'i, who was five years his senior. Qara'i was not a habitué of the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths. In contrast to most of Mohammad-Taqi's students who had good memories of him as a teacher, Qara'i remembered his tenth grade Arabic teacher at Ferdowsi High School as a pretentious, strict and ill-tempered person who, instead of teaching his subject matter went off on a tangent criticizing Shater Abbas Sabuhi's poetry.²⁷ Before coming to university, Qara'i taught mathematics at high school. But unlike Shari'ati, he had resigned his teaching position and became a full time student. The fact that both Ali and Qara'i were older than the majority of their peers and had a common professional experience as teachers played a role in bringing the two men together.

Qara'i was close to Mashhad's literary milieu. He was a friend of Mohammad Habibollahi, whose father Abolqasem was a renowned poet and a professor at the Faculty of Literature. He was also a friend of Akhavan-e Sales, a highly gifted radical modernist poet who sympathized with the Tudeh party. As a member of Akhavan's inner circle of friends Qara'i, who had a flair for poetry, had the privilege of hearing Akhavan's unpublished poems as well as his literary suggestions and criticisms. Familiarity with traditional and modern poetry and his intimacy with Akhavan-e Sales set Qara'i apart from the rest of the students. Shari'ati who was already familiar with and extremely fond of poetry found a priceless companion

in Qara'i.

Gradually the two young men became inseparable. Qara'i recalls that, '[we] were such a complete whole that we did not need anyone else'.²⁸ For a while they formed a closed literary duo. They were more senior than other students in class and were respected by their teachers, and yet sitting together they spent a good part of every period making fun of the ignorance of some of the lecturers and finding faults in their words. Subsequently they neither took notes nor paid much attention to lectures. When exams came around, they borrowed notes from other students about six hours before the sitting, and each revised the notes for three hours. Qara'i remembers that once Ali was supposed to review the borrowed notes from six in the morning until nine and then pass them on to him. Yet Ali failed to show up until five minutes after the beginning of the exam which was scheduled at noon. Afterwards, using his soft-spoken mannerism and his smile, Ali convinced Qara'i that as usual he had forgotten their appointment. The two friends were so close that such incidents could not make a dent in their relationship.

During the summers they usually took off for short trips to villages around Khorasan and especially to the south of the province around the Torbat-e Heydarieh area. Milani accompanied them on most of their excursions. On their return to Mashhad, they would catch up on the Western movie serials they had missed. Mashhad had its own share of movie theatres – Shahrzad, Homa, Iran, Ferdowsi, Kristal and Metropole – to mention only the most frequented. At the time, the American actor Ken Maynard who played in Western movies and had ended his career in 1944, was very popular. Maynard was a handsome, quick drawing cowboy with a romantic appeal who performed wonderful stunts on his horse, Tarzan.²⁹ Maynard's films, which hit Mashhad's movie screens some twenty years after their production, proved to be a sensation among Ali and his friends. Ali was even nicknamed after Ken Maynard's character, who always wore a pair of revolvers, becoming 'Ken with two Mausers' (Ken-e do mowsari). The Mauser was a German gun well known among Iranians. Although there was some resemblance between Ali Shari'ati and Ken Maynard – both had very long foreheads and thin eye-brows – the nickname referred to a quaint custom among his cigarette-smoking friends: whoever possessed two cigarettes, automatically gave one to Ali.³⁰

Outside the classroom, and usually during the vacations, the Shari'ati-Qara'i duo did a lot of serious talking. They would spend hours walking around Mashhad discussing philosophical topics such as creation, being, dialectics and materialism,³¹ issues Shari'ati had addressed in his *Khorasan* articles before he went to university. Tired of walking they regularly went to their special daily hang-out, a small back room to Mash Qaffar's grocery store at the end of Arg, one of Mashhad's main avenues. There, they would drink tea, smoke cigarettes and discuss Sufism and gnosticism. Having read Ayn al-Quzat-e Hamadani, Mowlavi and Attar, they would spend hours reciting and analysing texts from these Sufi luminaries while they discussed the Sufi way. During the final year of their university, Shari'ati and Qara'i were involved in a poetry reading circle which met at Dash Aqa's coffee

house, the hang-out of a group of Mashhad's modernist poets. The circle included Ja'far Mohadess and Fereidun Mojdeh and its members took turns reading and reciting poems by Nima, Akhavan, Tavalloli, Ebtehaj (Sayeh) and Karon.³²

Just before nightfall, Shari'ati and Qara'i often went to a restaurant at the romantic site of Kuhsangi. There they read modern poetry, especially that of Akhavan and Tavalloli. Their regular nocturnal meetings started with the recitation of their favourite poems and then they would read to one another their own attempts at modern poetry-writing. A few hours of these sessions were always committed to the content analysis and assessment of the poems they read or spoke of. Such vigils would go on well into the night, never desecrated by political discussions. The poetic and intellectual revelry was disrupted only by the golden rays of sunshine at dawn refracting from the gilded dome of Imam Reza's mosque.

Shari'ati's relationship with Qara'i during his time at university was apolitical. The two men neither discussed politics nor formal religion. Shari'ati at the time was said to have been sceptical of religion and critical of the works of jurists such as Mohammad Baqer Majlesi. Qara'i recalls that Shari'ati never mentioned his political engagements and beliefs. Not once, for example, did he bring up the topic of Abu Zarr, or talk about Iran's political problems.³³ This, however, did not mean that Shari'ati had lost all interest in politics. During his university years he continued to see and keep contact with some of his old political friends such as Safavieh, Delasa'i, Sarjam'i and Mozaffari. He also organized a mountain climbing group which included some old political friends and a rotating group of younger political activists who had been involved with the Iranian Peoples' Party.³⁴ Although a heavy smoker, he managed to climb hills, give the younger members tips on climbing, tell jokes and recite modern poetry along the way. The younger members of the group were said to have been very impressed by his speeches, his subtle political remarks and his kindness.³⁵ On these excursions, commenting on the clergy, he would say 'one was not in need of a turban to guide and direct the people.'³⁶ At this time Shari'ati had completely separated his spheres of involvement. He had developed different circles of friends, each involving different people often with different kinds of interest, yet each group was confident of its exclusive intimacy with him.

In 1957, the university provided funding for the promotion of extra-curricular activities. The students of the Faculty of Literature founded a Literary and Artistic Society, which organized lectures, poetry reading and colloquiums.³⁷ It is said that at this time there was some rivalry between Qara'i and Milani on the one hand and Shari'ati on the other. When the society held elections for a president, Ali Shari'ati was elected – a victory that was welcomed and viewed by some of his old friends as a wrenching of power from the hands of Qara'i and Milani.³⁸ The society organized different events at which both students from the university and prominent local and national literary figures spoke. During Ali's presidency, one of the lecturers was Arnold Toynbee, the renowned English historian who was officially invited to Mashhad. At the Society's regular functions, some of which

were held at the main hall of Foruq High School, Ali presided over the events, discussed the presentations and commented on them. The society rapidly gained in popularity becoming an important arena for the students to exhibit their literary talents.

A Patron of Modern Poetry

Apart from being an apolitical friend, which at this time Shari'ati appreciated, Qara'i was a wealth of first hand information on both modern and traditional poetry. He was also an indirect link to Akhavan and the unfolding of his poetic talents. It would be safe to assume that it was Qara'i who seriously interested Shari'ati in modern poetry. This does not mean that prior to his friendship, Shari'ati was ignorant of modern poetry or did not appreciate it. Qara'i probably helped him bridge the gap between familiarity and conviction. The medium for this transformation was Akhavan. Qara'i claims that in 1955 when he met Ali for the first time, he was unfamiliar with modern poetry and that after hearing and reading Akhavan's poems he gradually became enamoured of the poet's works. After this initiation Ali is said to have started writing modern poetry himself.³⁹

In the anthology of his favourite poems, which Shari'ati compiled in October of 1952 and presented to Delasa'i, he did not include any by Akhavan – which he certainly would have done had he known of Akhavan or had he been impressed by him. On the other hand, he included one of his own poems, 'Untold Secret', written in the modern rhythmic style. 'Untold Secret' proves that Shari'ati was familiar with modern poetry, and had even tried his hand at it before he met Qara'i. But the fact that the poems he published in *Khorasan* during 1954 were in the traditional rhythmic style demonstrates that he remained more at ease with it. From 1956, however, Shari'ati's view of poetry underwent a major transformation. He became a relentless advocate of modern poetry and especially that of Akhavan's. His own poetry became modern in style and reflected the influence of both Akhavan and Tavalloli.⁴⁰

At this time, three different poetry circles held regular meetings in Mashhad. To different degrees, Shari'ati was involved with all three. The older and more renowned classical literary figures of Mashhad met every Friday morning at the house of the poet Mahmud Farrokh, better known as Ostad Farrokh, who was a contemporary of Malek al-Sho'ara Bahar.⁴¹ A more mixed and less rigid group of literary figures met on Tuesday nights at the home of Negarandeh, who was a retired army major. Here, the participants recited poetry in the traditional form of *qasideh* and *ghazal*.⁴² (The *qasideh* is a poem which has a purpose and the *ghazal* is a short love lyric usually with a metaphysical or mystical content. Both follow a single rhyme). Most often the circle recited the work of the master of *ghazal* poetry, Hafez. Even though the traditionalist trend prevailed among this group, it was not as hegemonic and pervasive as it was in Ostad Farrokh's circle. Subsequently

it attracted a wide variety of people, though the composition changed at different meetings. Between 1957 and 1958 the following attended a number of gatherings at Major Negarandeh's house: Ali Bagherzadeh (Baqā), Ahmad Kamalpur (Kamal), Negarandeh, Ali Milani, Qara'i, Mirzazadeh, Ali Shari'ati and a young cleric called Seyyed Ali Khamene'i. Curious about what went on in the traditionalist circles and intent on using the occasion to promote modern poetry, Shari'ati was a regular participant.⁴³ At the gatherings Ali read a couple of poems by Akhavan and ridiculed the classical style that was employed by the traditionalists⁴⁴

In May 1957, Shari'ati published a *ghazal* called 'Worse than separation' (Badtar az faraq) in the literature and art section of the regional evening daily *Aftab-e Sharq*, which had a traditionalist literary tendency.⁴⁵ The poem appeared along with works of nationally known poets such as Tavalloli, Simin Behbehani, Mas'ud Farzad, Parvin E'tesami, Forugh Farukhzad and Nader Naderpur. It was, however, Shari'ati's first modern poem, the 'White swan' (Qoy-e sepid) published in *Aftab-e Sharq* on 25 May 1958, which created a considerable uproar among Mashhad's traditionalists.⁴⁶ A series of articles signed 'Saleki' and published in *Aftab-e Sharq*, allegedly attacked and insulted Shari'ati for his championship of modernist poetry, accusing him of trampling upon traditional poetry which remained the Iranian peoples' only source of pride.⁴⁷ Shari'ati believed that the whole campaign against him and the partisans of modern poetry was orchestrated by Ja'fari, a staunch supporter of traditional poetry and the governor of Khorasan. Ja'fari is said to have organized a new traditionalist poetry circle in Mashhad to counter the rising influence of the modernists.

Despite the controversy and *Aftab-e Sharq's* anti-modernist inclination, Shari'ati's poems written in the modern style continued to appear in the newspaper. Well separated from traditional poetry, the paper even opened a special column for modern poetry. In it, Shari'ati's poem, 'What am I?' (Man chistam?), appeared above Forugh Farukhzad's, 'Your shoulders' (Shanehha-ye to). Shari'ati's poem ended with, 'I am a dew caught in the claws of the night of life, nameless and homeless, hoping for the dawning of the sun of death.'⁴⁸ His modern poems such as the 'White swan', 'What wrong have I done?', 'There is no way out of here' and especially 'What am I?' became popular and were memorized and recited by the young.⁴⁹

A fortnight after the publication of Shari'ati's poem 'What am I?', an article entitled, 'A piece of Modern poetry and such a fuss', written by Naser, probably a pseudonym, appeared in *Aftab-e Sharq*. The author referred to Shari'ati's original controversial modern poem published in *Aftab-e Sharq* and wrote that ever since, the newspaper had been bombarded with letters supporting and attacking modern poetry. Having published a few of them, *Aftab-e Sharq* had decided to put an end to the claims and counter-claims by publishing a poem by Hossein Khosravi Kermani as the last word on the subject. Khosravi Kermani was probably Amini's pseudonym since in his later writings, Shari'ati referred to the person who had written this poem as Hossein Amini.⁵⁰ Khosravi Kermani or Amini's poem began

by inviting Shari'ati to abandon his new style, which was neither becoming nor desirable, and continue writing in the traditional style. Reminding Shari'ati that no one had ever said or written modern poetry in Khorasan's literary environment, the poet asked him not to deviate from the tradition of Hafez, Sa'di and Ferdowsi.⁵¹

Shari'ati frequented a third literary society called Peikar or the combat literary circle, held at Fakhreddin Hejazi's home every Friday night. At the time, Hejazi was the editor of the daily *Khorasan*. This circle, organized in the last quarter of 1956, was composed of politicised and aspiring poets and intellectuals. It has been suggested that the Peikar circle was the literary and cultural wing of the Centre.⁵² The circle's rather inelegant title served a dual purpose. It had a militant political ring while it also expressed the implicit purpose of the group in combatting the anti-modernist literary circles of Farrokh and Negarandeh.⁵³ The circle was inclined to new ideas, yet it remained respectful towards traditional poetry. Its young participants included, Isa Nikukar, Farzin Shokuhi, Taqi Saket, Mansur Bazargan, Qasem Sonavi, Ali Shari'ati, Ne'mat-e Mirzazadeh and Shafi'i Kadkani who was a young clergyman at the time and wore the clerical garb. It is interesting to note that Qara'i, who was very close to Shari'ati, was never seen at this gathering.

At the Peikar literary circle Shari'ati made a considerable impression as an able and talented partisan of modern poetry. Fascinated by Akhavan, Shari'ati recited his latest poems with intense feeling and conviction. Akhavan's 'Chavoshi' was read so expressively and analysed so effectively by Shari'ati that it inspired the young participants to become involved with modern poetry.⁵⁴ One winter night, wrapped in his long overcoat, Shari'ati walked into Hejazi's home with Akhavan's newly published book, *The End of Shahnameh* tucked under his arm. The members of the circle were listening to someone reciting a *ghazal*. Shari'ati gave the book to one of those present and said, 'read this instead of all that nonsense'.⁵⁵ Shari'ati's praise for modern poetry was always accompanied by a ruthless attack on classical poetry. On the same night, referring to short love lyrics or the *ghazal*, he is said to have retorted that 'This mistress of Rudaki is a thousand years old, she has become an old widowed hag, leave her alone.'⁵⁶ As a devout crusader, all means seemed permissible in order to obtain the desired objective. Shari'ati consciously belittled traditional poets and their poetry to undo the literary mind-frame that was the result of generations of inculcation. He depicted traditional poetry as a once rich and fertile village which had gradually lost its freshness and appeal.⁵⁷ Rats and cockroaches, he said, came to inhabit the village and gnawed at the roots of all greens. With the dried up rivers and shrivelled plants, the village became deserted. Traditional poetry, even that of Hafez, Shari'ati maintained, was nothing but a withered ghost town.

Aside from demolition tactics, Shari'ati had other means of winning people over to his cause of modern poetry. Shafi'i Kadkani, one of Iran's towering contemporary literary figures, recalls that after long and heated debates at the Peikar literary circle, it was Shari'ati who lured him towards modern poetry. Mirzazadeh

an equally prominent contemporary Iranian poet and participant of the circle recalls that his generation was raised in the tradition of classical poetry and was deeply attached to it. According to Mirzazadeh, Shari'ati's comments and arguments played a determining role in his own conversion to modern poetry. Shari'ati's eloquent recitation of one of his own poems, 'The Drowned Victim of the Way', had left a deep impression on Mirzazadeh.⁵⁸ After some forty years, Shafi'i Kadkani still remembered and could recite Shari'ati's poem 'What am I?', which he believed was greatly influenced by Tavalloli and Akhavan's famous poem; 'Winter'.⁵⁹ As much as Shari'ati was anxious to meet Akhavan, who lived in Tehran at this time, the occasion never presented itself until 1971, when the two were brought together for lunch at Qara'i's house in Tehran.⁶⁰

Discussions at the Peikar circle were not limited to literature and poetry but included social, political and religious topics. One afternoon in 1956 the talk drifted towards gnosticism and the extent to which Qur'anic verses lent themselves to gnostic interpretations. Shari'ati argued that the content and language of the Qur'an was symbolic and that its symbolism allowed for a gnostic interpretation.⁶¹ Fascinated by the amplitude of a gnostic experience he had decided to embark on this path through a painful process of soul-searching and sceptical speculation on the existence of God.⁶² His depressed mood, referred to in his letter of resignation to the Iranian Peoples' Party, was the outcome of this process of intense contemplation and self-interrogation. Shari'ati's state of mind at this time may be encapsulated in an anxious comment of his mother confiding in a friend of hers that, 'Ali has gone mad, he constantly sits alone in a corner and talks to himself.'⁶³ Shari'ati had not gone mad, he was in the process of questioning the role of God in his traditional religion and discovering a God that gave him the certainty he very much needed. This was God, the absolute Truth from a gnostic perspective.

Before the 1953 coup, Shari'ati sought the meaning of life and the reason for his existence in political activities and the search for political truth. Faced with the colossal disappointment of the coup and the frustration and impotence that he felt in its aftermath, he questioned his political certitudes. His overwhelming urge to seek truths found an unfathomable outlet in gnosticism. He began from a position of doubting and interrogating his 'self'. Shari'ati wrote, 'How terrifying it is to feel that the more I seek to find myself the less I succeed, whatever I recognize as myself, is not me but a stranger who deceitfully poses as 'me''⁶⁴ He then recognized the reflection of God in man and nature and the symbiotic relationship between man, nature and God. Shari'ati wrote, 'I would like to relate all these 'I's that I find in myself to a mysterious truth which is 'other than I', all manifestations of Him'.⁶⁵ Having sailed on the seas of scepticism and incertitude Shari'ati reached the shores of certainty. The raft which saved him was that of gnosticism.

The sequence of political disappointment and gnostic attraction followed by political enthusiasm and the rejection of gnosticism became a familiar feature of Shari'ati's life; it was only towards the end that he transformed this cyclical trend into a dialectical spiral and presented a synthesis between politics and gnosticism,

the two forces which attracted him equally and about which he never ceased to think. A simplistic, yet useful, correlation could also be observed between Shari'ati's periods of gnostic reflection and his literary and poetical works. Poetry was the signpost of his gnostic-cum-romantic periods. It was his medium of expressing his love for all that was unworldly and perfect and his rejection of all that was worldly, especially politics. Shari'ati's emotional and gnostic literary works belong essentially to his periods of political disenchantment and even repulsion. During his periods of political enthusiasm and activity, however, his pen became less active and his energy was vented through his words. The very same rousing emotions were suddenly channelled into revolutionary oratory.

Imprisonment, Marriage and Graduation

In less eventful days than those we now live in, the monotonous life of a Mashhadi was interrupted and marked, if only for a short spell, by a birth, a marriage, an imprisonment or a death. Between 1957 and 1959 three developments threw Shari'ati's life out of its normal orbit. Chronologically, on 16 September 1957 he was arrested and imprisoned, on 15 July 1958 he married Puran Shari'at Razavi and in December 1958 he received his BA and qualified for a scholarship to France.

On 3 July 1957, the Iranian parliament ratified the agreement between the National Iranian Oil company and Agip, an Italian oil company which called for the establishment of a joint company called SIRIP. In reaction to these developments, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) clandestinely published and circulated a 24-page pamphlet called 'Oil'. The pamphlet emphasized the increasing political and economic dependence of Iran on the West and argued that such a state of subjugation had been the consequence of Iran's agreement with the Western oil consortiums after the fall of Mosaddeq.⁶⁶ The publication of this pamphlet agitated the government and the security forces launched a massive clean-up operation against NRM members and sympathizers. In the very early hours of the morning of 16 September, 17 people were arrested in Mashhad.⁶⁷ The detainees were immediately packed into a military plane and dispatched to Tehran, where they were transported to Qezel-Qal'eh prison. Fourteen of those arrested were adherents of the Centre, one was a cleric by the name of Afsah ol-Motekalemin and two others.⁶⁸ Those arrested, included Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati, Taher Ahmadzadeh, Asayesh, Amel Amelizadeh, Taqi Amelizadeh, Mohammad-Qasem Qazi, Abedzadeh, Ebrahim Milani, Sedarati and the youngest of the group, Ali Shari'ati.

The arrest of this group is said to have been the result of information obtained from Afsah al-Motekalemin, who frequented the religious and political circles in Mashhad.⁶⁹ Afsah al-Motekalemin, who was apparently sent to Mashhad by Kashani in 1950, was an eloquent public speaker and had certain ties with the security service. In the week before the arrest of the NRM group, two active NRM members from Tehran arrived in Mashhad to hold official talks with their counterparts.⁷⁰

This contact is said to have enabled Afsah al-Motekalemin to give specific names to the security forces. The interrogations of those arrested proved that Afsah al-Motekalemin had provided detailed information of their discussions and actions. The security forces had arrested him to shed the suspicion that he had been the informant.

The arrest of the Mashhad group had considerable repercussions, not only in Mashhad but also in Tehran. In parliament Ja'far Behbehani questioned Eqbal, the prime minister, on the reasons for the wave of arrests. Eqbal responded that the group was accused of following Mosaddeq's ideas.⁷¹ At Qezel-Qal'eh prison, Ali Shari'ati seems to have been somewhat of a celebrity even before his arrival. According to his own recollection, General Teymur Bakhtiar, who headed the newly created SAVAK, had sought him out personally when the prisoners were flown in from Mashhad. When Shari'ati was presented to him in the corridors of Qezel-Qal'eh Bakhtiar quipped, 'so you are the Shari'ati they talk about, we thought we had captured an elephant!'⁷²

In prison, Ali's cell was right in front of Ahmadzadeh's and when the guards were not walking through the corridor the two men could talk to one another.⁷³ Under cross-examinations, Shari'ati is said to have kept his humour. He was accused of insulting the Shah in a conversation at Ahmadzadeh's house. Shari'ati denied the charge, arguing that he never used invectives or obscene language. The interrogators reminded him of his alleged statement that, 'this flower vase should be shoved up the Shah's rear end.' Quick wittedly, Ali referred to Afsah ol-Motekalemin and said, 'this is not the kind of expression I use, it is Seyyed Javad's favourite cliché.'⁷⁴

In his interrogations, some eleven years later, Shari'ati referred to his arrest in 1957 and recalled that during the first days in Qezel-Qal'eh they were harshly treated.⁷⁵ From the emasculated and patchy published report of Shari'ati's file at SAVAK, it is evident that Shari'ati's line of defence was in conformity with that of the official Jebheh-e Melli (National Front) position. He seems to have reiterated his nationalist and Mosaddeqist beliefs, proclaimed his opposition to the communist movement and 'approved the constitutional monarchy'.⁷⁶ After approximately a month Ali and his father, along with a few others, were released on 10 October 1957.⁷⁷ Four days after their release, SAVAK informed the Ministry of Education that it no longer suspected Mohammad-Taqi and Ali Shari'ati of any political wrong-doing and that their probity as teachers was affirmed by that office.⁷⁸

The experience of arrest and imprisonment had a major impact on Shari'ati. The relatively long period of soul-searching which had started in 1955 had worn him down. After his release he went back to his normal life and his studies. His previous dissatisfaction with political activities, however, turned into a dislike for what he came to consider as a futile exercise. In 'What am I?', one of his last poems before his arrest, his melancholic mood is evident. He spoke of himself as 'a silent myth in the arms of a hundred deceit' or 'a strayed bird who had lost his home in

the midst of the night'; yet signs of his fiery past glowed in the middle of his poems. Shari'ati spoke of his 'rage hidden beneath each forced smile' and referred to himself as 'the roars of an enchained rage'.⁷⁹

The message of Shari'ati's poem, 'The drowned victim of the way', written after his imprisonment, however, was devoid of defiance or resistance and nearly an open invitation to complacency. It contained a simple and clear warning to all those who embarked on the road to political struggle. Shari'ati cautioned against the outcome of such an endeavour. He finished his poem forewarning that; 'except for death and sadness one cannot find a friend in this desert. Come, return, you who are a stranger in this path. For this road leads to nowhere.'⁸⁰ Ten years later, explaining his mood at the time when he wrote this specific poem: 'This is the year I stopped my march ahead and I learnt that this path did not lead anywhere.'⁸¹

Shari'ati's poem, 'The drowned victim of the way' was a sensitive and honest appraisal of political struggle in a repressive society and was based on his own experience. Had Akhavan, his model, not fallen into this same mind-set? Had he not also judged that 'in this garden of the hopeless, there is no eye awaiting spring'?⁸² Shari'ati lamented the reproach of his political friends and companions who accused him of sowing the seeds of despair and discouraging others from becoming politically engaged.⁸³ His words, they thought, could only benefit an enemy that wanted to convince people of the futility of political struggle.⁸⁴ Even though Shari'ati was fully conscious of how the state could capitalize on his statements, he felt he had the moral duty to tell the truth. He wrote, 'I did not want to deceive anyone ... I welcomed the reproaches, the accusations and the insults of my dear colleagues and friends so that I would not lie ... I did not want to and I could not deceive anyone for my own sake.'⁸⁵

This sense of futility, despair and resignation remained with Shari'ati until 1960. He had turned to gnosticism while some of his friends were still full of enthusiasm for the future and remained committed to the political struggle. In an attempt to invigorate Shari'ati after his imprisonment in March 1958, an old political friend suggested that; 'political activists of our type, should not stand around with our hands crossed on our chests, we should be constantly prepared for the approaching final struggle.' Throwing a bewildered look at him, Shari'ati had responded; 'I wish everyone were as optimistic as you.'⁸⁶

The second important event in Shari'ati's life during this period was that of his marriage to Bibi-Fatemeh, known as Puran on 15 July 1958. Puran Shari'at-Razavi was born to Hajji Ali-Akbar and Pari in November 1934.⁸⁷ Her father, a merchant, was originally from Khorasan; but the family had moved to Tehran where the children went to school. The Shari'at-Razavis maintained their family house in Mashhad. Puran had six brothers and one sister. She had lost one of his brothers when she was seven. Ali-Asghar, also known as Tufan, was killed in action defending Iran during the 1941 Soviet occupation of Azarbaijan. She recalls her father as a flexible person who firmly believed in his children's education. Her brothers,

especially Azar, were very supportive of Puran and her academic pursuits. Growing up among so many boys had its impact on her. She became independent minded and determined. In the eleventh grade, Puran was at Mashhad's Foruq High School when she received news of Azar's death in Tehran. On 7 December 1953, less than four months after the coup, students at Tehran University demonstrated against the resumption of diplomatic relations between Iran and the UK and US vice-president Richard Nixon's visit to Iran. On that day the army, which had kept a presence on the university campus since the coup, fired on the students and three were shot to death. Azar Shari'at-Razavi, Naser Qandchi and Mostafa Bozorgnia, all students of the prestigious Faculty of Engineering of Tehran University, became the first post-coup martyrs of the student movement against the Shah. Azar's death was a great shock to Puran who lost not only a brother but a friend and a mentor. In spite of her depression and despair, she graduated from high school. In 1955, she entered the Teachers' Training College in Tehran and chose to study French. With the opening of the Faculty of Literature at Mashhad, her father decided to bring her back to Mashhad, where the family had once again taken up residence. After having gone to classes in Tehran for about two months, against her will, Puran joined the same entering class as Ali Shari'ati.

Forced to return to Mashhad, Puran had a difficult time adjusting to the new circumstances. The closed and conservative environment of the city depressed her. Mashhad was overwhelmingly a religious city and women usually wore the veil or some sort of a head scarf. Puran, however, independently minded and rebellious, refused to do so. Dispirited, she sat quietly in her classes. She recalls that the first time she noticed Ali was within the first week, when Habibollahi (Navid), their professor of literature, introduced him as a promising literary figure. She remembers that the whole class turned to look at the lean, rather tall, balding young man. In their French class, taught by Madame Boulevin and attended only by six students, Puran remembers Ali's sense of humour. She was impressed by his cordial manners, helpfulness, and the ease with which he switched from serious literary or social subjects to witticism and jest. Within the context of the Literary and Artistic Society at the Faculty of Literature the two saw more of one another. Puran was a regular participant of the Society, where she once read a *ghazal* by Hafez.⁸⁸ It was not before long that Ali dedicated a copy of his newly published book on Abu Zarr to Puran. When the medium for the first expression of affection is a highly charged sociopolitical work, it is most probable that Ali believed that he was courting a socially conscious and politicized girl, a relatively rare phenomenon in Mashhad of the mid 1950s.

Accounts of Ali's attraction to Puran seem to validate the notion that Puran's strong character played a very important role in her appeal. According to Ali's friends at the time, two incidents involving Puran had left a highly favourable impression on Ali. The first went back to 7 December 1953, when Puran was a high school student. News of her brother's murder was given to her as she came out of her school at the end of the day. Deeply upset, Puran is said to have lost

control of herself and hurled insults at the government and the shah, calling them butchers and murderers. Ali Shari'ati, who happened to be in the neighbourhood, was struck by Puran's boldness and courage. According to Qara'i, this incident, as was recounted to him by Shari'ati, was at the origin of Ali's attraction to Puran.⁸⁹ The second incident occurred while the two were at the Faculty of Literature. One day in their literature class, when Shari'ati was absent, Hossein Amini is said to have read a poem praising the shah. Puran apparently raised her voice to attack him for extolling the shah. Shari'ati and Akbar Safavieh, who were strolling around the campus and accidentally heard Puran's commanding voice: Puran's boldness on that day, according to Safavieh, deeply touched Shari'ati.⁹⁰

As time went by, fascinated by Puran, Ali often spoke to his friends of her and his feelings towards her.⁹¹ In 1957 he proposed marriage. To his surprise, Puran turned him down arguing that she wanted to marry an educated person and that before marriage she intended to finish her own higher education first.⁹² In view of the fact that neither had obtained their BA, Puran maintained that, for the time being, marriage was out of the question. Ali, who could not take a no for an answer, argued that their marriage would not be an impediment to her education, since he wanted an educated wife. He promised to do everything in his power to assist Puran in realizing her goal.⁹³

Ali also had to fight for Puran on another front. As the son of Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati, the founder of the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths, he was bound by certain conventions and customs. Traditionally, Ali's bride had to be chosen from someone within the family and one of his cousins had already been singled out. Ali's wife also had to be a staunchly practicing Muslim. This meant that she had to be veiled. The contrast between Puran's modern family and Ali's traditionalist family was considerable. The idea of his son marrying an unveiled classmate who was not even willing to wear the veil after their marriage, was not readily acceptable to Mohammad-Taqi.

After about a year, Ali's negotiations on both fronts were successful. Even though Puran refused his proposal for a second time, Ali's promises were finally accepted. For his part, Mohammad-Taqi, faced with his insistence and his arguments in favour of an educated wife and the unrelatedness of piety and purity to wearing the veil, gave in. The two were married on 15 July 1958. As usual Ali was late even to his own wedding. The marriage became a hot subject of gossip in Mashhad. Murmurs about Mohammad-Taqi's son having married an unveiled classmate lingered long enough to depress Ali, who lamented the reactionary mentality of his fellow citizens.⁹⁴

The third crucial event during this period, which radically changed the course of Shari'ati's life was the utterly unexpected receipt of a scholarship to study in France. At university, Shari'ati was far from your typical studious scholar bent on excelling in his grades. Even though his class had its crop of hard-working and diligent students such as Salehi and Razmjou, Shari'ati was not one of them. On the contrary, his friends remember that he did not even study for exams; yet he still

achieved good grades.⁹⁵ Expecting to graduate in the Summer of 1958, he was told that due to his excessive absences he had to sit for his exams in September.⁹⁶ This effectively meant that he would receive a failing grade for the Spring semester and would have to retake the exam. This unexpected development troubled Shari'ati. The reason why he was adamant about taking the exams in June was not academic at all: he had planned a long trip with Qara'i in September and did not wish to see their plans upset. Qara'i, who knew Fayyaz, interceded on Shari'ati's behalf. Fayyaz referred Shari'ati to his respective professors. After Shari'ati and Qara'i pleaded with Yusefi and Khorasani, both accepted to overlook the excessive absences and allowed Shari'ati to sit for the regular June exam.

The exams proceeded regularly without any surprises. Then came the Arabic exam. After the exam Khorasani, their teacher, called on Qara'i and Shari'ati and in their presence corrected their papers. Both received twenty out of twenty. Khorasani then handed the rest of the papers to Qara'i and Shari'ati for correction.⁹⁷ Astounded by Khorasani's proposal, the two quickly discovered that he was very serious. They divided the exams, which were about twenty, among themselves and set to work. Once they had finished, they started exchanging notes on the grades they had given. None of the grades reached ten which was the minimum passing mark. A good number had scored as low as one and two. Shari'ati and Qara'i decided to give them sevens and eights so that their average would not plummet. Having completed their task, they returned the corrected copies to their professor. Khorasani looked over the corrections and handed in the final grades with a minimum of alterations. Having failed Arabic, all the graduating students except Shari'ati and Qara'i had to retake the exam in September.

To become first in class at the university required two prerequisites. The student had to obtain the highest average over three years and was obliged to pass all his courses at the first sitting. The result of Khorasani's exam essentially put everyone out of the race except Shari'ati and Qara'i. The two major contenders for the position of the best student, namely Salehi and Razmju, were automatically eliminated. Both had very high averages but they were no longer eligible for the position of honour. Qara'i recalls that the issue of recognition for academic excellence was never of any great importance to either him or Shari'ati. They were so busy with other concerns that to them their University degree was just a tool. At the end of the year, when the averages were announced, Qara'i's was 14.52 out of 20 and Shari'ati's 14.54.⁹⁸ Under such exceptional circumstances, of a kind of which life is full, Ali became the best student of the class, a position of honour and distinction but nothing more, for no material rewards accompanied the achievement. Both Shari'ati and Qara'i had no plans other than to go back to teaching.

Shortly after their exams, however, the shah announced that those graduating university students who had ranked first in their respective faculties would be given a state scholarship and sent overseas to pursue their education. The promise, which immediately became a decree, applied to Ali who had ranked first in the Faculty of Literature. This was an utterly unexpected bombshell. Some thirty-six

years later, Qara'i remarked jokingly that 'had I known that the best student would have been given a scholarship abroad, I would have done my darned best to come first.'⁹⁹ The fact that Shari'ati's foreign language was French determined his destination – Paris. Either fate or luck had willed him to go there. Shari'ati had wished to rid himself of Iran; now his wish was presented to him on a golden platter without him even lifting a finger. He went to Paris in late May 1959. Behind him he left his friends and his wife, who was six months pregnant.

Paris

'The city of all beauties and all freedoms'

For a young man who had spent the entire twenty-six years of his life in provincial Khorasan, the Paris of late 1950s and early 1960s was a considerable shock. Shari'ati was not the typical young Third World student seeking an education in the West, and Paris was not the typical European city where one would simply get 'an education'. Shari'ati was not the blank third world student prepared to accept everything and anything Western. He had, even though with a considerable degree of scepticism, a deeply inculcated religious upbringing, a passion for gnosticism and a romantic poetic inclination. Behind him he also had a track record of anti-colonial and nationalistic political activities. At the time, Paris was at the world's hub of cultural and political activity and interaction. It was the cradle of intellectual resistance against the oppressive colonial policies of the French state in Algeria and the scene of unrestrained intellectual activities and passionate ideological debates between giants such as Camus, Sartre, Aron, de Beauvoir, Merleau-ponty and Lefort. Paris was also the capital of romance and what could be considered licentiousness. Out of a smothering, silent cave Shari'ati set foot in the midst of a colourful, blaring carnival on one bright summer's day.

Shari'ati's relationship to his host country and all that it represented culturally, intellectually and materially was at best ambiguous. It was one of attraction and repulsion. For different reasons it was similar to the kind of feeling he had for his own country. The environment he had come from disturbed and displeased him, hence the feeling that what prevailed back home, intellectually, socially and politically left much to be desired. Even before his arrival in Paris he had been influenced and touched by some Western intellectuals, hence the realization that all which is Western was not necessarily 'bad'. On the contrary, even before he arrived in Paris he was convinced that there was a lot he could learn from the West. This learning was, however, not an unconditional surrender to all that was Western. It was a guarded overture. The first phase was that of gradual exposure to, comprehension and analysis of new facts, conditions and ideas. The second was of making critical contrasts between the newly-acquired information and his preconceptions and prejudices. This lengthy and laborious process eventually gave birth to a synthesis and a new paradigm – the potent revolutionary tool that he took back home.

Observation, Introspection and Adjustment

On his arrival in Paris in late May 1959, Shari'ati went directly to Kazem Rajavi's house. There, according to his own account, he spent some time adapting himself to his new environment.¹ In the company of his compatriots, however, he felt as though he was living in a cultural ghetto secluded from the world outside. All his activities were subject to the decisions of his friends who had come to Paris before him. He got to know Paris through their interests. One of his first experiences in the city was a visit to the Centre de Réarmement Moral at 22, av. Robert Schuman in Boulogne Billancourt. The Centre was committed to spiritual regeneration and upheld the four doctrinal principles of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute objectivity and absolute love based on faith. Its adherents believed that the purpose of religious regeneration was to fill the vacuum created by capitalism and Marxism.² To a group of provincial students from Mashhad, it was the closest substitute for the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths. It provided them with a religious sense of security faced with the 'wantonness' of their new environment. Shari'ati and his friends participated in religious events and group therapies conducted at the Centre. As much as the Centre was a safe haven, he recalled that it was also a place for amusement. On one occasion when all participants, having supposedly entered into a state of trance, related what the spirits of the dead or people far away communicated to them, one of Shari'ati's friends started yelling and shouting. He explained that he saw his brother in flames reaching out to him and asking him for help. His shrill howls and wails were so piercing and effective that all those participating were greatly moved. After seemingly coming to himself, Shari'ati's friend explained to the participants that he had seen the image of his brother who was in Iran and could not afford to leave the country. His performance was so effective that he collected a fair amount of money.³ Later, Shari'ati was invited by the director of the Centre to attend and speak at the organization's international conference, usually held in Geneva. He accepted the invitation and went to great lengths to prepare his speech. Yet at the last minute, to his surprise, the invitation was abruptly withdrawn.⁴

To avoid falling into the trap of reliving Mashhad in Paris by continuously frequenting Iranians and their foreign girl-friends, Shari'ati started looking for a room in a French family.⁵ He not only wanted to begin learning about French society and the French way of life for himself, but still in his melancholic mood, he needed to experience the depths of solitude and loneliness. Interested in a typical Parisian area, one where he would not find any 'foreigners', his friends suggested the 15th neighbourhood, which in 1959 was an essentially middle and working class quarter close to the river Seine and with a view of the Eiffel Tower from its sidewalks.⁶ Shari'ati soon found a place at 15, Rue Gutenberg. By mid-June he had become a lodger at Mr Bodin's house which was situated on the second floor. The Bodin family, which Shari'ati described as 'young, educated, Catholic and French', consisted of Mr and Mrs Bodin and their two children of three and five years and

Mrs Bodin's sister, Solange.⁷ Soon Shari'ati endeared himself to this typical French family and 'became its sixth member'.⁸

Having found a place to live, Shari'ati, who had arrived at the end of the academic year, had to organize his life and prepare for university. As a government scholarship student, he initially received 8000 rials, which came to about 750 new francs each month.⁹ On his arrival, he went to the Office of Students' Supervision at the Iranian Embassy. With the consent of this office he planned to study a year of French in order to cope with the university courses. So in July he enrolled at the Alliance Française, the biggest and most popular language school in Paris. In mid-August, he also enrolled at a language school called Institut Panthéon.

In the mornings he would attend French language courses, which lasted some two to four hours. Having located the library of Oriental Languages, he would spend his afternoons at the library of Institut National des Langues et Civilization Orientales (INALCO) at 4 rue de Lille. In the evenings he would walk along the Seine for about an hour and then head towards home. After dinner at home he spent two to three hours doing his homework and reading before going to bed. During weekends and public holidays he sometimes spent the whole day in his room studying and reading.¹⁰ In a letter to Kazem Motahedin, he complained about the tiring routine of his life, yet he added that he had no choice.¹¹ Later, he recalled his days at the Bodins and wrote that at the time he appreciated the arts and aesthetics and did not have any strong religious feelings. During this period Shari'ati was preoccupied with the world and the people who lived in it as well as with humanism, gnosticism and theosophy.¹²

Dissatisfied with his language classes, Shari'ati soon dropped out of the Alliance Française. Instead he decided to teach himself French through working on a project that had preoccupied him back in Mashhad. Impressed with Alexis Carrel even before he went to university, Shari'ati had intended to translate 'Supplications' and in 1957 vouchers for the book had even been pre-sold. In the introduction to the translation that Shari'ati wrote during the first months of his stay in Paris, he explained that the original text of the book had been lost in an 'accident'.¹³ Once in Paris, he obtained a copy and translated it with the aid of a French-Persian dictionary. Shari'ati recalled that he abandoned his studies, shut the door on himself and dedicated his entire time to this project.¹⁴ Once the short text of about forty pages was finished he sent it to Motahedin. Shari'ati had originally planned to include an introduction with a detailed biography of Carrel, and Motahedin wrote to enquire why it had not been included. Shari'ati replied explaining that he had no time for it and informing him that in the meantime he had discovered that the French looked upon Carrel as a Nazi collaborator.¹⁵ Shari'ati finally wrote a short introduction explaining that constraints of time and the inaccessibility of sources meant that he was unable to write a detailed biography.¹⁶ Obviously, in this introduction Shari'ati did not allude to the French view of Carrel.¹⁷

Like any newcomer unfamiliar with a strange land, its people, culture and products, Shari'ati's only solace was in things that had the familiar and secure scent of

home. He missed everything dear to him including his Homa cigarettes and sweet melons. In December 1959, he tried to give up smoking. Locking himself in his room, he read the *Masnavi* and went without cigarettes for a few days. He even wrote to Puran proudly reporting his victory.¹⁸ The cease-fire, however, did not last long! In this period of unsettlement, only letters from Puran, relatives and friends in Iran could sooth his loneliness. The only real substitute for his loved ones back home was the *Masnavi*, for which he had sent immediately. The epic Sufi poem consoled him and rendered him invincible in the face of the uncertainties and dilemmas with which Western culture confronted him. Every once in a while he would have lunch with a group of friends – Aryan, Ozv-e Aminian, Sarraf and Jabbari. They would eat a Persian dish, preferably *qeimeh pulow*, play chess, read poetry and chat.¹⁹

During this period, Shari'ati's correspondence with friends and relatives back home took a good part of his time. Delays in the receipt of letters from his wife and his father worried and depressed him. In a letter to Puran, written on 15 and 16 July 1959, he complained that her letters were late, reported on the receipt of a letter from Fakhreddin Hejazi and asked for the address of Khorasani, his favourite professor back at the University of Mashhad.²⁰ Puran, Mohammad-Taqi and Shari'ati's friends, did their best to prevent him from becoming homesick. Puran sent her records, which Shari'ati listened to while reminiscing about her.²¹ Sarjam'i, sent him a tape recording of the voices of his mother, his sisters, friends and Hooshmand Aqili's folkloric songs of Khorasan.²²

Shari'ati's first assessment of Europe was a simple reflection of what he saw during hot summer days on the streets of Paris – scenes that affronted his prudish sense of morality. After about a month, on 1 July 1959, he wrote to Kazem Motahedin that 'the first thing one notices here is the approach of the inevitable and certain demise of the Europe that plundered everything we had'.²³ Judging on his initial, superficial observations, Shari'ati wrote, in today's France, 'inventions and innovations are only conducted in the field of dance, cabaret, wine and gambling houses. Research is limited to the variety of ways and kinds of copulation among the different people of the world, fashion, eroticism and the means of welcoming and looking after tourists and rich Americans and Orientals'.²⁴ Even though Shari'ati acknowledged his 'bewilderment' before the grandeur of the educational institutions and libraries of Paris, he believed that since the youth were becoming corrupt and ethical values belonged to the outgoing older generation, society was doomed.²⁵ Based on his short experience at the Moral Rearmament Centre and the behaviour of a group of Catholic novices in his class at the Alliance Française, Shari'ati became highly impressed with the influence and activities of the Catholic Church. He viewed its educational and social activities, especially among the young, as an important antidote to the wave of moral decadence and laxity that he was convinced had overcome France. He compared the Christian religious establishment in France with the Islamic religious establishment in Iran lamenting that the former was far superior to the latter which was 'archaic and stupid'.²⁶

After the beginning of the regular academic year in October, even though Shari'ati was still studying French, he started inquiring about the educational programmes and degrees he could pursue during the next academic year at university. He solicited information and opinion on the content and suitability of various programmes. Nasser Pakdaman, who was already enrolled at the Sorbonne, recalls that in mid-November of 1959, Hassan Qazi, a friend of his, informed him that a new student from Iran was seeking council about his future field of study.²⁷ Shari'ati, accompanied by Qazi, met with Pakdaman on the second floor of a smoke-filled café in the student quarter of Saint Michel called Mahieu, where students would drink a cup of coffee to justify the hours they spent there studying. In Paris a café had, and still has, the dual purpose of providing material and intellectual services. At the time Shari'ati was interested in studying philosophy of history. Pakdaman recalls that he tried to dissuade him from this discipline, arguing that even though the subject was very much in vogue before the Second World War, it had lost its appeal ever since because it was no longer considered as a scientific field. Instead, Pakdaman encouraged Shari'ati to study sociology, which he argued included the philosophy of history as a sub-discipline. He advised Shari'ati to look into Raymond Aron's courses in sociology at the Sorbonne, especially since Aron had studied the philosophy of history. The conversation must have had some influence on Shari'ati, who became seriously interested in studying sociology.²⁸

Shari'ati's degree from the University of Mashhad was in Persian Literature. As a scholarship student, the academic discipline and field that he was to pursue in Paris had to be chosen with the consent of the office of the Students' Supervision at the embassy. Intent on studying sociology, he approached the office to tell them of his decision. After long deliberations, however, the Iranian authorities informed him that he could not study sociology and that he had to continue his post-graduate education in the particular field that he had earned his BA. In January 1960, Shari'ati wrote to his father lamenting the fact that he had not been authorized to study sociology and that he was obliged to continue with Literature.²⁹ Powerless to officially pursue his field of interest, Shari'ati embarked on a dual educational process. The dreary and mechanical exercise of fulfilling the requirements of a doctorate for which the government had sent him to Paris was to him a soulless chore, for which he was to do the minimum with the least amount of enthusiasm. Conversely, driven by sheer joy, like a bee in a rose garden, he plunged himself passionately into the survey and study of all the different courses that seemed interesting to him. Shari'ati's real educational experience in Paris should be assessed in the light of what he pursued fervently and not what he was obliged to do.

After a few months, Shari'ati moved out of the Bodins. He found a room at 1, rue Schoelcher in the 14th arrondissement. There, he remembered that the window of his apartment opened on the Montparnasse cemetery, which he admired as, 'the only pure, uncorrupted and soulful corner in this city of wine, lust and money.'³⁰ During this period, other than his friends from back home, Shari'ati had become close to Ali Reza Ariyan and Kazem Ozv-e Aminian. Back in Mashhad,

Qazi knew each of these individuals independently and thought that they would be excellent company for one another in Paris. He therefore dedicated Akhavan's book, *Akhar-e Shahnameh*, (The End of the Book of Kings) to all three of them. According to Qazi, the book brought them together.³¹ Ariyan and Shari'ati found a common passion in the *Masnavi* and Shari'ati recalled the delightful hours that they spent together reflecting and pondering over Mowlavi's poems and how these regular episodes allowed them to forget the bitterness of being strangers in a foreign land.³²

Later, Shari'ati moved into 14 rue Lacroix in the 17th. This was probably where he lived with two other Iranian housemates, Mr M. and Mr K, each occupying a room. Later he wrote a quasi-parody of this experience. Through the description of the lifestyles and characters of his housemates at the time, which provides an interesting stereotype of a good number of Iranian students abroad, Shari'ati tried to recount his own idiosyncratic position. His sketch refers to three Iranian students sharing a flat in a street close to the Champs Elysées.³³ The first, a very pious Muslim, never enjoyed the worldly pleasures Paris offered. He would not venture near a discothèque or a cabaret. He was so concerned with proper Islamic rituals that he would not even eat meat because in France the animals were not decapitated in the proper Islamic manner. Yet, according to Shari'ati, he was selfish, conceited, boastful and avaricious. The second student, was the complete opposite of the first. He was a handsome, pleasure-seeking and generous *bon vivant*. Interested only in 'wine, women and dancing', he 'was oblivious to everything else that happened on earth and beyond the heavens.'³⁴ The third, who is none but Shari'ati himself, is depicted as lacking both the piety and blind faith of the first and the worldliness of the second. Shari'ati praised his courage since he was 'neither a man of worldliness (*donya*) nor a man of religiosity (*din*), neither a man of infidelity (*kufr*) nor a man of submission (*Eslam*)'. 'His mistress' he wrote was 'a memory which warmed his entire interiors.'³⁵ He was said to be 'in constant wrangling over his own ideas, with his head always in the bosom of books and his heart filled with the love of freedom.'³⁶ In this account, Shari'ati's lingering doubts, a sense of out-of-placeness and uniqueness in which he takes pride, and a romantic memory, real or fictive, is revealed. Even though the narrative was written some six years later, the feeling that it conveys seems to be accurate, since the same kind of mood overwhelmed him six years later.

Shari'ati's unsettled state of mind and his continuing quest to know and understand his real self, find an answer to the meaning of life and decipher the relation between man, nature and God often put him in a melancholic mood. In April 1960, he sent a postcard to Safavieh, his old friend. In it, he wrote that all was well on the surface, however 'psychologically, the same illness and problems that existed continue and had even worsened.'³⁷ Shari'ati then quoted Mowlavi and wrote, 'He whose enemy is "his own" shadow is neither safe in India nor Yemen.'³⁸

As time went by, certain changes could be detected in Shari'ati's attitude. His letters written some seven or eight months after his arrival in Paris demonstrated

an interesting development. He himself was very aware of this transformation. He wrote home, 'I wish I had never come here and never tasted the meaning of freedom. I should have stayed back there and read about it only in books.'³⁹ This development came from his growing understanding and knowledge of the society he had come to live in. After a while, contrary to his initial analysis based on the distinction between the explicitly immoral West and implicitly moral East, Shari'ati's nationalism and Islamism paled before a more universal view. This may have been due to the influence of Mowlana's universal message in the *Masnavi*. First, he came to view distinctions in non-geographical, non-national and non-religious terms. In another letter to Motahedin, he wrote; 'Just as I do not believe in boundaries between countries, I do not believe in boundaries between people.'⁴⁰ Shari'ati began to redefine distinctions between people on the basis of a new set of criteria. He defined a nation as an entity or a group of people with common concerns and preoccupations. On this basis he divided the world between two nations; those with a common concern and preoccupation and those without it. He also identified two types of people: 'those who live within the boundaries of humaneness, possessing gnostic and ethical values and those who live beyond them.'⁴¹ Judging individuals on the basis of their commitment to certain noble values, Shari'ati declared that as much as he was a disciple of Abu Zarr, the close companion of the Prophet, he felt attached to Charlie Chaplin, whom in his own way was a 'compassionate friend and companion of human beings.'⁴² In a short time Shari'ati had broken down the discriminatory walls of religious, national and even professional distinctions which could arbitrarily become the source of values and anti-values. Instead he crowned compassionate humaneness as the main criteria of judgement. Even though he retained this universal approach, Shari'ati's value-system during an interlude became totally eclipsed by a social view based primarily on class analysis.

In the summer of 1960, after a year in Paris, Shari'ati went home to Mashhad. He was happy to see his relatives and old friends, yet the real purpose of his trip was to bring back to Paris, Puran and his son. Shari'ati had great affection for Ehsan, his son, who was almost one at this time and whom Shari'ati had not seen since his birth. Overwhelmed by excitement, Shari'ati is said to have pinched Ehsan's cheeks and kissed them admiringly, repeating, 'my goodness, the miracle of Mazinan.'⁴³ The family returned to Paris for the beginning of the new academic year. They moved in to a small flat on rue Daguerre in the 14th neighbourhood.

Political Revival and Radicalization (1960–1964)

Shari'ati's short return during the summer of 1960 coincided with a sudden change of political climate in Iran. On 21 July 1960, after some seven years of suppression, the National Front announced its revival in a widely circulated declaration. In less than a month, the students' wing of the Second National Front was allowed to

mobilize the first post-coup rally of Mosaddeqist forces. The meeting, held at Jallalieh, attracted some 30,000 people.⁴⁴ The speakers attacked the government and its handling of the summer elections, called for their annulment and demanded free and democratic elections. The Iranian political horizon suddenly seemed to clear and the possibility of open political struggle seemed realistic. The unexpected and exciting events that Shari'ati followed closely in Iran played a considerable role in the gradual shift of his mood from isolation, reflection and introversion to active political engagement.

Upon arrival in Paris in the Spring of 1959, Shari'ati was instructed by his political friends in Mashhad to contact a group of Iranian activists. Grappling with existential issues at the time, he was not in the mood for political activities. Justifying his failure to make contact some months after his arrival, he wrote to Motahedin inquiring whether the list given to him was an 'official roster' of political comrades or just a casual group of friends, sharing 'common ideas and beliefs'.⁴⁵ Implying that his ignorance of the political status of these people had created a dilemma for him in approaching them, he relieved himself of the immediate responsibility of seeing them. He did, however, contact Parviz Amin, who was recommended to him by the National Resistance Movement in Mashhad.⁴⁶ Amin had come to Paris in 1958 and with a small group of friends wrote and distributed political circulars and tracts under the name of The Youth of the National Movements in Europe (Javanan-e Nehzat-e Melli dar Europa).⁴⁷ During his first year in Paris, Shari'ati met with this group, but only intermittently.

His reflective mood meant that Shari'ati absented himself from most political gatherings, during that first year. In his interrogations, however, he refers to an initial reticence among Mosaddeqist students to involve him in their political pursuits. Torabali Baratali, one of Shari'ati's close friends in Paris recalls that in the spring of 1960, Shari'ati met with a few National Front student activists and leaders. After this meeting a reunion was called by National Front students to discuss the possibility and modality of working with Shari'ati. Some members opposed collaboration with Shari'ati and argued that in view of his political leanings they would prefer not to work with him.⁴⁸ Referring to this period, Shari'ati wrote that Mosaddeqist students considered him to be 'unworthy of collaboration'.⁴⁹ The obstructionist position of some Mosaddeqist students was rooted in the old dispute between Shari'ati and members of the Iranian Peoples' Party back in Mashhad.

Shari'ati's non appearance may have been intertwined with a rumour that circulated among politicized Iranian students that Ali had squealed in prison when he was arrested in 1957. A friend of Ali's was cautioned by a respectable National Front member about talking freely in front of him. This friend was told that 'it was not clear what Ali had said in prison'.⁵⁰ Incidentally, a few members of the friend's family were among those arrested in Mashhad. After their release, they had spoken respectfully of Ali's conduct in prison. Based on his information, Ali's friend categorically denied the allegations. Soon the rumour died out.

On 17 May 1961, the Iran Freedom Movement (*Nehzat-e Azadi-ye Iran*) was founded and officially proclaimed in Tehran by its architects, Mehdi Bazargan, Mahmud Taleqani and Yadollah Sahabi. The Iran Freedom Movement (IFM) was based on four essential convictions. First, Islam constituted the cornerstone of its ideology and consequently it believed that Islam could not be separated from politics. Second, it was a nationalist organization. Third, it respected the constitution and believed that freedom of opinion, press and assembly along with the independence of the judiciary, the separation of powers and finally free elections constituted its fundamental principles. Fourth it considered itself a Mosaddeqist party and believed that Mosaddeq was the only head of state that was legitimately elected by the majority of the people.⁵¹

The arrival of IFM on Iran's political scene played an equally important role in Shari'ati's political reawakening in Paris. Aside from the fact that IFM's political position resembled that of Shari'ati's at the time, Bazargan as a person had always been an important model for Shari'ati. In Shari'ati's eyes, Bazargan was a modernist and a true religious renovator whom he admired. This admiration continued throughout his life. Furthermore, Shari'ati respected Bazargan's personal and political honesty and integrity. He knew Bazargan before he came to Paris. Bazargan, characterized his relation with Shari'ati as 'very close and intimate'.⁵² One of those with whom Shari'ati corresponded with during his first year in Paris was Bazargan. In a letter to Motahedin he mentioned having written to Bazargan, to whom he referred to as Mohandess or Engineer and lamented the fact that he had not heard from him.⁵³

The political waves in Iran were creating ripples among Iranian students abroad, a large number of whom had been politically engaged during the Mosaddeq era. After the revitalization of the National Front and the birth of the IFM, Shari'ati launched himself into politics. Shari'ati's activities during this period took three major forms. First, he became involved in the politics of the Second National Front. Second, he became deeply engaged with a number of anti-government publications. Third, he participated in the political life of the Union of Iranian Students in France and that of the Confederation of Iranian Students in Europe and the US. The immediate object of Shari'ati's revived political interest was the conviction that the new political conjuncture allowed for freeing Iran from what he believed to be the grips of a foreign-dominated, usurper and dictatorial regime. In line with the aspirations of the National Front, he hoped to see the restoration of a legally elected government.

Shari'ati's political activity, however, also took another form not very common among his fellow students. His quest for the truth or the definitive explanation continued; yet at this stage it changed direction. His interest shifted from the search for 'the Truth' and self-searching to the ways and means of resolving Iran's problems. Uncommitted to an established ideology providing a neat set of prescriptions and solutions, a good part of his energy was spent in formulating the outline of an appropriate ideology in the Iranian context. Shari'ati engaged in activism, in the

mechanical everyday political acts of a militant, and in intellectualization or rational reasoning and reflection, each undertaken separately. In Paris he witnessed genuine activism and verbosity – the utterance of words that did not convey much more than sound. From the limitations of his own political experience and the observation of the activities of others around him, he learned and synthesised. Shari'ati's political experience during this period of his life played a crucial role in the methodology and strategy that he adopted once he became repoliticized in Iran.

Discrete Presence

After his return from his vacation in Iran, Ali Shari'ati gradually entered the Iranian political scene. From the summer of 1961, he participated ever more regularly in almost all significant Iranian meetings, assemblies and congresses. He also took part in the usual student sit-ins and demonstrations against the Iranian government. However, unlike most politicized students at the time, he kept a very low profile. Against the heated oratory and often provocative showmanship of his comrades, Shari'ati's quiet and inconspicuous presence went unnoticed. Official party or organizational positions over which the battle of individual egos never ceased did not tempt him nor, according to his many contemporaries, did he ever yearn or strive for them. One of his friends believed that Ali's government scholarship was the reason for his subdued behaviour at student gatherings. But if that was the main reason for his unobtrusive presence then he would hardly have participated in activities that may have been construed as anti-governmental or allowed himself to become known as an anti-regime militant. Shari'ati was genuinely uninterested in political or organizational positions and the squabbles and political manoeuvring they implied. His self-esteem placed him above what he believed to be such trivialities. At this stage in his life, the domain in which Shari'ati made his presence not only felt but distinctly noticed was that of penmanship.

After the reactivation of the Second National Front in Iran, student sympathizers and activists started organizing party cells in Paris. Five, each with seven members coordinated and managed by one of National Front's main student leaders, started to function. The bi-weekly meetings of these cells were usually held at the homes of the coordinators.⁵⁴ Their purpose was to discuss events in Iran, recruitment strategies and the means of gaining control over various student organizations. It was not until the winter of 1960–61 that Shari'ati started to frequent these cells. He was, however, a roving observer, hopping from one cell to another and never a permanent member of any. Sometimes he was asked questions about current events in Iran, which he answered; but he never took the floor or coordinated any of the cells.

Well before Shari'ati's arrival, the Union of Iranian Students in France (*Ettahadieh Daneshjuyan-e Irani dar Faranseh*) was already in existence. The

Union's activities were initially non-political and essentially concerned with the welfare of students abroad. Towards the end of the 1950s, the three main political tendencies, the National Front, the Society of Iranian Socialists and the Tudeh Party that co-existed in the Union started to vie for the control of its executive committee. The Union had its irregular quarterly meetings at the Salle de Géographie in Boulevard St. Germain, where it rented a large lecture hall. The National Front, whose ranks had swollen after the 1960s, pursued an aggressive policy of gaining political control of the Union and furthering its political interests through the Union.⁵⁵ The Union practised parliamentary rules of democracy, and the attainment of power within it depended on electoral success. The National Front therefore used all possible legal tactics to obtain a majority. It posted a member at the door who knew all the students and their political affiliation. His job was to count potential votes and if the Front did not have a clear majority a filibusterer took the floor ensuring that no time was left for voting. The presence of eligible voters was thus crucial to the success of the Front's political objectives. It is within this general framework that Shari'ati, as a committed National Front sympathizer, started attending the Union meetings where he became acquainted with a number of National Front activists.⁵⁶ He would arrive at the meetings punctually and sit throughout them;⁵⁷ but he would always remain silent, just sitting back observing and casting his vote.

Penmanship

From the late summer of 1960, Shari'ati became more actively involved in different aspects of student politics. On the occasion of the eighth anniversary of the *coup* against Mosaddeq's government, Amin approached Shari'ati asking him to write a declaration reminding Iranians of that ominous historical date. Shari'ati accepted and soon produced a passionately written text which read; 'Eight years have gone by. Convicted of the crime of having afflicted the first lash at the pillaging West, a people still remain in chains.'⁵⁸ Amin recalls that the following year, he asked Shari'ati to write another declaration on the same occasion, which he again accepted. Shari'ati is said to have asked, how many years had it been since the coup and when Amin responded eight, Shari'ati had smiled and said, 'but in the declaration that we wrote last year I said "eight years have gone by", so it must be nine!' He then started writing.⁵⁹

In late summer of 1961, Shari'ati was contacted by activists of the National Front in Paris and asked to collaborate in the relaunching of *Nameh-e Parsi*. This had originally been the publication of the Union of Iranian Students in France and its objective was to foster an alliance between the various political shades that existed among the Iranian students in Europe by reflecting various opinions. The first issue of *Nameh-e Parsi*, named after Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*, had appeared in May 1959 and its lead article was entitled 'Towards the fostering of union

and solidarity.'⁶⁰ Although in the first issue there is no reference to the journal's editors, Amir Pishdad and Nasser Pakdaman, were responsible for it.⁶¹ The contributors to the first issue, a veritable 'Who's Who' of later renowned Iranian intellectuals, writers, artists and academics, came from different political shades, but the biggest cluster belonged to Maleki's Third Force.⁶² The fact that the Union's publication was effectively controlled by sympathizers of the Third Force reflected the balance of power between the competing political forces in the Union itself. After its third issue, that of January 1960, the publication of *Nameh-e Parsi* was abruptly interrupted. It was not until December 1961, that the first issue of the second volume appeared in Paris.

This publication appeared just before the first congress of the World Confederation of Iranian Students in Paris. By this time, the balance of power in the alignment of student politics had shifted in favour of the Second National Front. The responsibility for bringing out this issue of *Nameh-e Parsi* was entrusted to Shari'ati, who had already demonstrated his literary skills back in Iran. Even though the front page was a reproduction of the first issue of the previous volume, the new *Nameh-e Parsi* clearly reflected a change in its editorial board.⁶³ None of its previous contributors had continued their collaboration, the variety of articles had diminished and their tone was more political. A good part of this issue was dedicated to the reproduction of the resolutions, declarations and statutes of various student organizations and congresses. The lead article, 'A few words with our readers', stated that *Nameh-e Parsi* had become the publication of the Confederation of Iranian Students in Europe. The article appealed to students to set aside their indifference and apathy and use the journal as a platform for the presentation of their research and opinions. In addition to the lead article, the author of which was not acknowledged, there appeared two translations and two articles. The first translation, a poem called 'The black tempest' by Abdulrahman Nejar, was accompanied by the translator's introduction attacking 'the two colonialist monsters'. The translator's name was 'Ayn Mazinani, one of Shari'ati's known pen names. In his introduction Shari'ati raised an issue very dear to him. He wrote, 'In this movement, the share of those who struggle with their pen is no less than those who wage battle in the countryside and conduct clandestine warfare in the cities.' The second translation was of Jean Paul Sartre's 'What is Poetry', by Ali Shari'ati. To this translation, Shari'ati had again written an introduction calling for 'reflection' and 'speculation' on all events and happenings. The two remaining articles were entitled, 'An analysis of underdeveloped countries' and 'Sun Yat Sen'. The author of the first was Mahmud Montazer and that of the second one R-H. The fact that two of the translations are Shari'ati's undisputed work, demonstrates Shari'ati's more than casual involvement in the publication of this volume. The style of and references in the lead article strongly indicate that it may have also been written by Shari'ati while it has also been suggested that the Sun Yat Sen article was his.⁶⁴

In the winter of 1961, on the occasion of 16 Azar (7 December), the day on

which three Tehran University students, Azar Shari'at-Razavi, Naser Qandchi and Mostafa Bozorghnia were shot by the army in 1953, Iranian students in Paris organized a commemoration ceremony.⁶⁵ The presence of Puran Shari'at-Razavi the sister of Azar, one of the victims, added to the importance of the occasion which had been scheduled on the lawn of the Iranian embassy at 5 rue Fortuny. At this well-attended symbolic gathering, after a brief introduction a bouquet of flowers was presented by Pari Hajebi, a student activist, to Puran Shari'at-Razavi. Instead of standing in the front row or at the side of his wife, as usual, Ali Shari'ati's presence was discrete. His pensive silhouette was barely discernible somewhere in the middle of the crowd.

The Congress of the World Confederation of Iranian Students

The Winter of 1961–62 witnessed considerable commotion and excitement among Iranian students in Paris as activists converged on the city for the first Congress of the World Confederation of Iranian Students. This Congress was the first of its kind since it represented not only the Iranian students in Europe but also those in the United States. In addition, the message of solidarity sent by the students of Tehran University and the adhesion of National Front's student organization at Tehran University, gave it greater legitimacy and significance. At this gathering the World Confederation proclaimed itself the only representative body of Iranian students in Iran and abroad.

The Congress started its deliberations with aspirations to a grand alliance between different political forces against the regime in Iran. Soon, however, it was confronted with interminable haggling and squabbles. The political struggle over the election of the executive committee, the composition of which determined the political force which effectively controlled the Confederation, resulted in a major schism. The National Front students wanted to gain control by arguing that the two representatives from the United States, Faraj Ardalan and Hashemi, had the right of vote by proxy for all the thousands of Iranian students in America who were essentially National Front members or sympathizers. The pro-Tudeh students wanted to keep the National Front votes to a minimum and argued first against the fusion of the European and American chapters of the Union and second that the two representatives from the States should only have two votes. Finally, after further disagreements between Tudeh supporters of Tavakoli and National Front supporters of Reqabi over the official representation of the candidates from Berlin, the Chair declared an impasse and the cessation of the Congress. At this point, the partisans of the Tudeh party and of the Society of Iranian Socialists walked out. The National Front representatives, however, called for the resumption of the Congress. In the midst of a battered, hung Congress, the hopes of those who had come to assist in the creation of a united student movement turned into an elusive mirage. The Congress failed to obtain any meaningful consensus or

results and ended in a bitter schism.

Somewhere in the long classroom at Maison de la Chimie on rue de Grenelle where the Congress was held, Ali Shari'ati, who had come to participate in the deliberations of this supposedly historical event, sat baffled rubbing his forefinger on his forehead. The tug of war for hegemony of the Confederation between the Mosaddeqist National Front and the pro-Soviet Marxist–Leninist Tudeh party had a long history. This enduring division had torpedoed all attempts at unity. Yet Shari'ati had also witnessed attempts behind the scene at uniting National Front members whose personal rivalries threatened the Front's strategic interests at the Congress. Such bickering demonstrated that, despite its grandiose claims of liberating Iran, the Confederation had become the arena of personal power struggles. There were even fights and scuffles outside the meeting place between National Front and Tudeh members, culminating in the intervention of the French police.

After a declaration by the Executive Committee, explaining the reasons for the termination of the Congress, the National Front, claiming a legitimate right to a majority and accusing the Executive Committee of betrayal, provided a counter-assessment of the events entitled, 'The reasons for the secession of the Paris Congress; From the point of view of those who remained.' This declaration, written by Ali Shari'ati, addressed the Board of Directors, Enayat, Sabetian and Rezvani as 'the three primary school friends'.⁶⁶ It accused them of violating the statutes of the Congress, making arbitrary and secretive decisions, failing to refer their problems to the 'supreme committee', the highest authority of the Congress, and having falsely labelled the remaining representatives after the secession as the minority. Reflecting the suspicious and distrustful mood that prevailed, the declaration charged the Board of Directors with conspiracy to sabotage the unity of the students. It finally called for unity and effective participation in the struggles of the Iranian people for the attainment of freedom and a national government.⁶⁷

From the Paris Congress, Shari'ati drew certain important lessons. A few days later, he met with Qazi, more a friend from Mashhad than a political comrade.⁶⁸ Qazi, who had been a member of the Third Force, was ideologically closer to leftist students than to Shari'ati and the Second National Front. During their long friendly chat, Shari'ati continuously puffed at his 'Royal' cigarettes and tried to convince Qazi of the futility of student politics abroad. Surprised by such a statement coming from Shari'ati, Qazi, pressed him for clarification. Shari'ati's position was founded on two major arguments. First, he argued that since the political struggle of Iranian students was conducted abroad they had become separated from the palpable objective and subjective conditions which prevailed in Iran. Working within a vacuum, the student movement had become incapable of assessing the real impact of its activities on the Iranian scene and thereby conducting a meaningful and effective political programme. It had, therefore, lost sight of its principal objectives and had subsequently become entangled in personal and cliquish jealousies and power politics. Second, he argued that engaging in a bold and public campaign against the Iranian government, would guarantee the impossibility

of returning to Iran and mean spending the rest of one's life quibbling over non-issues in Parisian cafés. Shari'ati advised Qazi to keep out of these games as he himself had decided to avoid falling into this trap. He concluded, 'this is a dead puddle of water which cannot be nurtured from fresh streams, if you stay, you too will rot.'⁶⁹

Shari'ati's gradual disenchantment with student politics overseas was on more than one account. First, he came to question its practicality and usefulness in fostering socio-political change in Iran. Second, he came to view it more as a pastime where, in the name of a lofty cause, many tried to satisfy their personal ego. Third, he felt the absence of and the pressing need for a guiding ideology, which would give meaning and direction to everyday random and isolated political acts. Finally, his observation of the parliamentary process and the tactics employed to gain control of it, led him to doubt the legitimacy and efficiency of such a system. During his stay in Paris, Shari'ati had initially become impressed by Western democracy as a viable political system applicable in Third World countries. Later he began questioning its desirability, and most importantly its reliability as a means of representing the will of the people.⁷⁰ Shari'ati is said to have argued that the most authentic and the most reliable form of government was Athenian direct or participatory democracy,⁷¹ for within this form the representatives of the people could not privatize or misrepresent the will of their constituents. Shari'ati's first step away from representative democracy was based on his observation of 'parliamentary cretinism', as Marx called it, during his stay in Paris. He later rejected representative democracy as a viable institution for Third World countries and replaced it with the euphemistic concept of directed democracy or *democratie dirigée*.⁷² Whereas representative democracy manifested, albeit imperfectly, peoples' preferences and will, directed democracy was based on the superiority of a preconceived ideology and objective that guided society towards an ideal, irrespective of their will. It is noteworthy that when Shari'ati rejected the meaningful participation of the people in the political process, still believing in the virtue of representative democracy, he tried to convince himself and his readers that since a revolutionary leadership gained power through the support of the people, it had a mandate from the people who willingly abdicated their rights. He wrote that, even though the majority may incur hardships, 'the system was not imposed upon them, but they had consciously accepted it.'⁷³

Both in his correspondence while in Paris and his later writings in Iran, Shari'ati referred to his experience of student politics in Paris with some disdain. His objections centered around the same four major issues. In his later writings the first part of the subject he had discussed with Qazi in Paris can be readily identified. He mocked those who 'sit in cafés, meetings and conferences analysing, concluding and even planning under illusions.' He said, 'for these people, reality is only a matter of convenience and being is only the arena of political struggle ... wrong is what they are not and right is what they are.'⁷⁴ Shari'ati's dislike of student politics should also be understood in terms of his temperament and personality. He had

often repeated that he was not by nature a political animal and saw himself as more of a poet. In politics, compromising certain values and beliefs can be an indispensable part of success; in the eyes of those who do not wish to make such compromises politics becomes an opportunistic quest for personal power.

Looking to the Future

'Where should I start from once I get back to Iran?'

Questioning and criticizing the conduct of student politics did not mean that Shari'ati was about to abandon the anti-regime movement. He soon focused his attention on two very different methods of promoting political change. First, under the influence of successful revolutionary movements in Cuba and Algeria, he engaged in formulating a revolutionary plan for the overthrow of the Iranian government. Second, convinced that Iranian students overseas had to be politically and culturally educated, he sought to raise the level of their political knowledge and consciousness through his pen.

A month after the Paris Congress of the World Confederation of Iranian Students, and under its negative influence, Shari'ati circulated a memorandum to a very limited number of his political friends. Dated 15 February 1962, it stated that the overthrow of the regime was only possible through a revolutionary movement.¹ Addressing the question of when and how, he argued that revolutionary conditions already existed in Iran and that a spark sufficed to initiate the process. As for the problems confronting the revolutionary movement, he argued that in the revolutionary process, they would be overcome and victory attained.² The circular recommended that comrades in Europe and the United States should commence the first phase of revolutionary struggle. The idea of revolutionary struggle was to be propagated within the National Front and the parties constituting the National Front in Europe were to be called upon to create a clandestine 'special cadre'.³ In case they refused to embark on such a course of action, the memorandum recommended that the formation of the 'special cadre' be assumed by 'our own dedicated friends'. To this end, Shari'ati suggested that contacts should be made with the governments of non-aligned nations. Finally, following the example of the FLN, the Algerian National Liberation Front, his circular requested all students to report their current situation and whereabouts so that arrangements could be made to dispatch them to revolutionary training camps. Volunteers would be divided into two groups; one to go to the training camps, and the other to stay put to act as liaison personnel.⁴

A year later, on 16 January 1963, this proposition was sent to the executive committee of the National Front.⁵ During the last days of 1963, five IFM students, Parviz Amin, Bahram Rastin and Ali Sharifian from Europe along with Ebrahim Yazdi and Mostafa Chamran from the United States entered Cairo.⁶ Egypt had agreed to train the Iranian revolutionaries. Asked to join the group and leave for Egypt, Shari'ati, the initiator of the idea, refused. He argued that he was not into learning how to use TNT and explosives and since a group was going to the training camps, he would return to Iran, where he would start his work.⁷ Amin recalls that when he invited Shari'ati to join the founding members of the political and military organization, SAMA, 'The Special Organization for Unity and Action', modelled on Shari'ati's concept of 'special cadres', he refused.⁸ Mozaffari, who was present during the discussions on this topic in Paris, confirms that Shari'ati was against the idea of going to Egypt.

The Pen

By March 1962, or only two months after the Paris Congress, the second issue of a publication called the *Journal of the Organization of Iranian Students in France Associated with the National Front* (JOISFANF) appeared in Paris.⁹ A picture of Mosaddeq, with his own hand-written dedication to the organization under the picture, adorned the cover of the journal. The tone of this highly political journal was very different from *Nameh-e Parsi's* more literary style. The editorial lambasted the autocratic nature of the shah's regime, attacked the Amini government for its tokenism in bringing corrupt Iranian officials to trial and its attempt at land reform. It finally condemned the government for its imprisonment of National Front leaders. The issue included at least four articles by Shari'ati and was probably edited by him. Aside from the editorial, which does not bear the name of its author and does not seem to be the work of Shari'ati but that of Varjavand, and a poem entitled *Algeria* by Mirzazadeh, which he had sent to Shari'ati from Mashhad, there were seven articles. These articles, entitled, 'Be koja takiyeh konim?' ('What should we lean on?'), 'Jebheh-e melli chist va chehmiguyad?' ('What is a National Front and what does it say?') and 'Shenakht-e ketab' ('Learning about books') are certainly Shari'ati's. The pen-names used for these three articles are respectively, Sham', Sham' and Nam. The article entitled 'Learning about Books', gives the news of Franz Fanon's death and introduces his *Wretched of the Earth*. It is composed of an introduction and Shari'ati's translation of a few pages of the conclusion of Fanon's book. Proof of Shari'ati's authorship can be found in a later article which aside from the introduction on Fanon's death is a verbatim reproduction of the piece written by Nam. This second article appeared in the main National Front publication of Iranian students in the United States under the name of Sham' which was Shari'ati's most often used pen-name.¹⁰ A fourth article, 'Italy and the New Generation' is almost certainly Shari'ati's translation from the French

weekly *L'Express*. The article bears the pen-name Rowshan which means 'alight' or 'enlightened'. In the table of contents the first article is written by Sham' and the second by Rowshan. Shari'ati's use of the pen-name Rowshan after Sham' should be understood in terms of the meaning of each pen-name written successively. Shari'ati loved to play with words. *Sham' rowshan* means the 'lighted candle', a reference Shari'ati often made to himself. Furthermore, Harati, one of Shari'ati's close friends and political comrades in Paris remembered Shari'ati translating this article about the Italian communist party and Togliatti.¹¹

Although unfinished, Shari'ati's article on the National Front addressed the important issue of the meaning and significance of the concept. He argued that a National Front was a platform accommodating the concerted action and struggle of organizations and individuals of different 'social classes, philosophical and religious beliefs and socio-political thoughts,' who shared a common position on the most immediate problems of their country. Organizations and parties with varying, even conflicting, long-run socio-political priorities should delay their policy preferences until the immediate objectives of the National Front were attained. Shari'ati defended the National Front's slogan – 'Establishing a Legal and National Government in Iran' – by defining what he understood by the term. A national government, he maintained, would free Iran from the political and economic domination of foreigners, put an end to arbitrary and dictatorial power, assure individual and social liberties and restore a democratically elected parliament. It would mean 'the death of feudalism and the freedom of peasants'.¹²

Shari'ati's support for the National Front as a common platform for different political organizations becomes more meaningful in the light of the debates and infighting that ensued some ten months later. In December 1962 an important debate over the dissolution of different parties within the National Front and their fusion into one organization was opened at the first congress of the Second National Front in Tehran. The policy of dissolution won the day and was also adopted by the second Congress of National Front students at Mainz on 15 August 1963. This policy was later condemned by Mosaddeq. At the time, Shari'ati disapproved of dissolution and fusion.¹³ After his return to Iran in 1964, he discussed the issue of the dissolution of parties within the National Front with Ahmadzadeh, now a member of the Iran Freedom Movement, and told him that he strongly supported his position at the Congress of the Second National Front.¹⁴ Ahmadzadeh had spoken against the dissolution of the IFM and in favour of a National Front comprised of independent parties, each retaining their independent identity and organization.

The article entitled 'What should we lean on?' is the first fruit of Shari'ati's attempt to construct an ideological basis and an appropriate means of communication with the people to promote the struggle against the regime. It is more of a theoretical reflection than a political manifesto. For some time Shari'ati had been trying to formulate his ideas on the appropriate language or the effective point of entry into a dialogue with the Iranian people. In this article, the seeds of what

later became his magic wand of communication, ironically not with the people but with more educated social groups, can be observed.

Shari'ati's message in 'What should we lean on?' is simple. Assuming that success in a political struggle was impossible without the people's support, he identified a 'colossal rift' in all conceivable aspects between the 'educated and the common people'. The educated took pride in the use of 'European expressions', while they detested the use of Arabic words. The common people could not relate to 'European expressions' and found something divine, pure and virtuous about the Arabic words they were used to. Shari'ati argued that Iran was greatly influenced by its historical past, including its religion. The educated, however, had their eyes fixed on the future and were ignorant or even hostile to their own history. Venerating the past, the common people did not feel that the future belonged to them. Shari'ati concluded: 'A futureless past is a state of inertia and stagnation while a pastless future is alien and vacuous.'¹⁵ To provide an effective, applicable and acceptable political theory, he argued that political organizations should desist from 'imitating and translating' doctrines and theories conceived in a different socio-economic and cultural environment, since their 'language and ideas' would be alien to the common people. As if asking his peers to engage in his own experience, he called on the educated and National Front intellectuals to study Western schools of political thought and the revolutionary experience of all liberation movements, without losing sight of 'understanding their own society'. Shari'ati reminded his educated readers that a return to Iran's national culture, which was also an Islamic culture, was not reactionary. It was a tool with which intellectuals could communicate. An Iranian-Islamic discourse was thus the key to the hearts of the people who were the engines of the revolution. Many of Shari'ati's future sensational speeches in Iran were a variation on this very same theme.

Socio-political Activities

The months that followed the publication of JOISFANF were full of commotion. On 2 March 1962, on the occasion of Prime Minister Amini's visit to France, students brandishing their banners and displaying their placards marched on and tried to stage a sit-in on the grounds of the Iranian embassy. They called for freedom in Iran and denounced the imprisonment of nationalist political figures. A declaration written by Shari'ati was hastily read before the French anti-riot police arrived at the scene.¹⁶ The crowd suddenly began to disperse, a good number were arrested while some, including Shari'ati, managed to escape.

On the occasion of the Iranian new year, the students, through their Union, usually organized a gala, attended by people of different political persuasions. Even officials from the Embassy, who tried hard to foster friendly relations with the Union, were there. As the previous New Year party had been cancelled, the 1962 soirée was of special importance. At the time the Union was controlled by the

National Front and Torabali Baratali, its general director, was charged to deliver the welcoming speech. The presence of Embassy officials necessitated a delicately worded speech, neither too provocative nor too acquiescing. Baratali remembers that just before the opening ceremony, Shari'ati was persuaded to write his speech.¹⁷ Unaware of its content, Baratali remembered the butterflies in his stomach as he started reading Shari'ati's handwriting. Published a year later in *Iran-e Azad*, the speech was short and referred to the ability of the Iranian people throughout their history to survive and emerge from the most dangerous of catastrophes and disasters. Alluding to the ruinous Arab invasion, it explained how throughout history, by celebrating the new year, the Iranian people reminded themselves of their own eternal survival. It concluded that under the repressive control of the Arabs, the Iranians used to hum away 'he who stirs will survive and he who sleeps shall dream.'¹⁸ Reference to the Arab invasion and repressive Arab rule served a dual purpose: it represented a historical reality used to whip up Iranian nationalism, and also served as a reminder of the shah's repressive rule. Shari'ati's use of double meanings, in which the shadow of the word was more important than the word employed, became a trademark of his famous lectures.

In contrast to his melancholia during his first year in Paris, by the spring of 1962, Shari'ati's mood had completely rebounded. This new flow of energy and enthusiasm is reflected in a letter to Mirzazadeh thanking him for his poem on Algeria. Shari'ati explained that during the past couple of years he had tried to train himself as a 'rigid thinker', shedding his poetic and literary tendencies. 'Unfortunately,' he wrote, 'I can no longer comment on poems and poetry.'¹⁹ Referring to his government scholarship he wrote, 'The people are paying for me, so I cannot think of my own problems and consequently I cannot think of poetry. I am thinking of where I should start from, once I get back to Iran.' Shari'ati preached that it was unfair of poets to dwell upon their own problems, loves and pains; instead, they should 'cry out loud enough to awaken all those sleeping.' Referring to this period, Shari'ati later noted that poetry was the language of defeat.²⁰ With the ascendancy of political vitalism and activism in his life, romantic prose and poetry, the gentle expression of melancholy and gnosticism was sloughed away. Convinced that writing sentimental poetry was not the work of revolutionaries he put on his battlegear.

The Death of Ali's Mother

In late June 1962, Shari'ati received news of the death of his mother. He immediately made plans to go back. In view of the family's modest financial means, they decided to make the long journey by car. Ali's presence at the side of his father was important to Mohammad-Taqi, who was deeply grieved by his wife's passing. Mourning ceremonies in Iran are arranged so that, during the first forty days after the death of a loved one, friends and relatives surround the immediate family to

lessen their grief by their continued presence. During these days, Mohammad-Taqi's house in Mashhad swarmed with people. Ali's arrival from Paris added to the crowd. Old friends such as Kazem Sami came from Tehran to convey their condolences. During the twenty days that Ali spent in Mashhad, he met many such people, recounted his experiences in Paris and obviously discussed politics. Taher Ahmadzadeh remembers meeting Ali a few times on this trip.²¹ Ali had spoken about the political activities of Iranian students abroad. In his conversations with Ahmadzadeh and his other political friends sympathetic to the Iran Freedom Movement, he felt the need to organize, unite and especially to educate students lacking an ideological perspective. Later, when he returned to Paris, he wrote of the warmth and compassion he had received from his friends in Mashhad and of the comfort it had given him during his bereavement.²² Shari'ati also added that among the 'cold, incompatible and less sincere Iranian intellectuals abroad,' he hoped to ignite the same passionate fire that he had witnessed among his political friends back home.²³

During his stay in Mashhad, by sheer chance Shari'ati came to learn about a fact that was of considerable importance to his future as a university professor in Iran. A conversation with Mirzazadeh had turned to his academic pursuits in Paris.²⁴ Shari'ati explained that his doctoral thesis was in the field of 'comparative literature'. Having recently read a proclamation by the High Council of Education in the weekly *Sepid-o-Siah*, Mirzazadeh told him that a doctorate in Persian language and literature obtained from a foreign university was no longer considered acceptable by the Ministry of Education. Shari'ati was taken aback. He thanked Mirzazadeh, saying that he was surprised that none of his other friends knew of this fact, or if they did they had not bothered to tell him. He was now caught in a strange bind. He had been told to pursue his graduate work in the same subject as his first degree – Persian literature. Now the government had decided that a doctorate in Persian language and literature earned from a foreign university could not be recognized. The two decisions would effectively prevent him from teaching at the university level. The particular theme of his doctoral thesis, however, lent itself to a solution to what was becoming Shari'ati's nightmare.

After about twenty days the family decided to return to Paris. By this time Puran was seven months pregnant and a pediatrician friend of the Shari'at-Razavi family advised against her travelling by land. He suggested that they either waited until she gave birth or travelled by plane. The first option was out of the question since both Puran and Ali had to be back for the new school year. So they flew back to Paris. Here again, chance or predestination played a very important role in Shari'ati's life. As they were to discover later, had they gone by the land route, Ali would have been arrested at the border and imprisoned for his political activities in Paris. The instruction dispatched to the Bazargan border post, his point of entry, stipulating that Shari'ati was forbidden to leave the country, was not sent to Mehrabad airport.

Beyond the National Front

Back in Paris, Shari'ati presented certain ideas to some of his political friends who had IFM tendencies and to whom he felt close. His reflections were essentially based on his trip to Iran. In a letter dated 24 September 1962, having affirmed his commitment to the National Front and declaring his wholehearted belief in supporting, reforming and strengthening it, Shari'ati suggested that the movement could not entirely depend on the National Front.²⁵ He argued that the forces in the National Front were incompatible with one another and the IFM provided a more coherent body for the pursuit of the movement's interests. Shari'ati posited that the National Front was incapable of providing a viable ideology (*maktab*), which was desperately needed among the Iranian students abroad operating in an 'awful vacuum'. Issues such as 'socialism, system of government, religion, social and political schools of thought, revolution, reform, property ownership, Islamic countries and liberation movements,' Shari'ati reiterated, had to be addressed and discussed. Unless these issues were properly addressed within an ideology, Shari'ati argued, others would respond to this need and win away the youth. Returning to his old theme, Shari'ati wrote, 'we have to answer the old questions of 'what is to be done?' and 'where should we start in Iran?' Shari'ati argued that for this purpose 'the nucleus of the Iranian Freedom Movement had to be created abroad.' The members of the movement, he recommended, should remain clandestine and work sincerely within the National Front.²⁶ Once again, Shari'ati attacked those who believed that independent party commitments were incompatible with allegiance to the National Front and reiterated his belief in the perfect compatibility of the two activities. The inner circle of IFM sympathisers composed of Rastin, Amin, Tavasoli, Mozaffari and Shariati was now trying to expand itself.

Even though Shari'ati was neither a member of the Executive Committee nor the Council of the National Front in France, he participated in all NF meetings.²⁷ Members and sympathisers of the Front met once a month for a general assembly at a spacious café called Aux Armes de la Ville, right across from the Hotel de Ville. Each general meeting was attended by some 30 people. Shari'ati also participated in most of the decision-making reunions of the effective leadership of the National Front in France held at the home of Varjavand, Asgari or at a café located near the main gate of Jardin du Luxembourg, probably café Rostand.²⁸ According to Varjavand, securing Shari'ati's presence at all meetings was difficult because he was far from a disciplined organizational person. However, Shari'ati is said to have been consulted on every important decision made by the NF in France.²⁹

Shari'ati's schizophrenic existence both as a dedicated member of the essentially secular National Front and an ardent supporter of the Islamic oriented Iranian Freedom Movement, created certain problems. From his own perspective the two were perfectly compatible, since both forces were struggling for the Mosaddeqist ideals of the National Movement. One particular member of the NF in Paris, Mr 'S' who had originally been very close to Shari'ati, gradually became sensitive to

what he believed was Shari'ati's excess zeal for the political interests of the IFM. It was argued that this was at the cost of the National Front. The gradual rift came into the open in 1963 when Shari'ati and Mozaffari were sternly questioned and reproached for mailing the pamphlets and proclamations of the NF and the IFM in the same envelope.³⁰ On another occasion they were again questioned about their IFM tendencies. All attempts by other members of the NF to resolve the rupture between Shari'ati and Mr 'S' a member of the NF's Council and also a member of the editorial board of *Iran-e Azad*, failed to prove fruitful.

Iran-e Azad

After the First Congress of the National Front in Europe, held at Wiesbaden, it was decided that a newspaper reflecting the views of the National Front be published. Even though *Bakhtar-e Emruz*, published by Khosrow Qashqa'i had been such a newspaper, differences and hostilities between Qashqa'i, who was said to be surrounded by Tudeh Party members and the Executive Committee of the NF, led to the birth of a new paper called *Iran-e Azad*, or Liberated Iran. The editorial board of the newspaper was in Paris. Its members were Varjavand, Mokri, Suresrafil, Asgari, Ali Shakeri and Shari'ati.³¹ The editorship of the paper is said to have been given to Ali Shari'ati right from the start.³² Varjavand, however, maintains that he was in charge of the Publications Committee of the National Front including the management of *Iran-e Azad*. Varjavand, however, confirms that Shari'ati did become the editor of the paper after he left for Iran in April 1963.³³ The question of who was effectively responsible for the publication of *Iran-e Azad* became a sensitive issue to which Shari'ati later referred with certain bitterness.

From its inception in November 1962 to July 1963, when Shari'ati abandoned his responsibilities, *Iran-e Azad*, the official voice of the National Front bears the imprint of his intellectual influence and penmanship. The title of the editorial article of the first issue written by Varjavand, embarked the newspaper on its long journey: 'We shall free Iran'.³⁴ The newspaper claimed to be 'the voice of the aspirations and woes of the Iranian people and the guide to the correct path of struggle during all stages of the people's hard battle'.³⁵ It is not until the appearance of the third issue, that Shari'ati's writings, columns, style and his innovations in the layout, gradually come to dominate the paper. In the twenty or so pieces that he contributed to the paper, he covered the domestic problems of Iran devoting several articles, some of which were editorials, to the critical analysis of elections, the Shah's land reform and the religious uprising of June 1963. His other works covered aspects of foreign policy, such as the analysis of the border clashes between India and China or the future of the Algerian revolution. In his book reviews, he introduced and discussed books on the political history of Iraq (*L'Irak des révoltés*) published in Paris, Ayatollah Na'in'i's book on the 1906 constitution, *The Awakening of the Islamic Community and the Reform of the People*, with an introduction by

Ayatollah Taleqani and a book on *Nehru's Thoughts*, edited by Mahmud Tafazoli, both published in Iran.

In its fourth issue, *Iran-e Azad* started to publish a serial translation of Che Guevara's book on 'Guerilla Warfare'. Arguing that the conditions in Iran were similar to those in Cuba prior to the revolution, in the introduction to the article, the translator suggested that the Cuban anti-imperialist movement provided important lessons for Iranians. It has been suggested that these articles were translated by Shari'ati.³⁶ This contention, however, is unfounded, since the pen name of the translator, Hamun, was Ali Shakeri's pseudonym.³⁷ This unprecedented call to armed struggle in the National Front's official newspaper overseas coincided with the Front's Congress in Tehran where its main slogan remained that of installing a legal government in Iran.

The layout of *Iran-e Azad* underwent considerable change after the sixth issue. Instead of using type-set or quasi-type-set titles for articles, suddenly handwritten titles, most of which were Shari'ati's own, appeared on the front page and throughout the paper. From the seventh issue of *Iran-e Azad*, Shari'ati introduced his own opinion column called 'Events and Perceptions' (Ruydadha va bineshha), which became highly controversial. In the eleventh issue Shari'ati introduced a letters column which he subtly called 'Nishha va nushha' which could be translated either as 'venom and honey' or 'displeasure and pleasure'. In this column the responses and opinions of readers were presented and responded to by Shari'ati. Both 'events and perception' and 'venom and honey' appeared a few times after Shari'ati's departure from the paper and then faded away from the pages of *Iran-e Azad*.

Other than regularly attacking the Iranian government, Shari'ati tried to address certain key issues, the answer to which provided the elements of an ideology. In an attempt to set the stage for his own discourse, in the first 'Events and Perceptions' column, he asked his readers who had long resided in Europe to engage in a process of 'self-cleansing'.³⁸ He argued that information in Europe, especially on liberation or nationalist movements was tainted by the vested interests of the proponents of 'capitalism, communism, Zionism or fascism'. Attacking the communists in countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Algeria and Iran as tools in the hands of the Soviet Union and not necessarily Marxists, Shari'ati hammered at the idea that while Western imperialism was clearly identified as the main enemy of subjugated countries, the communists hiding under the mask of socialism constituted a greater obstacle to liberation. Describing Stalin as a 'murderer', he voiced the concern of all true non-aligned nationalists of his epoch. He wrote, 'For the communists, the thousands of Hungarian youths who bravely confronted the Soviet forces and sacrificed their lives, are merely American lackeys and for the West, the great champions of the new world such as Mosaddeq, Nehru, Nasser, Ben Bella and Castro are considered as communists.' Shari'ati concluded that the people of the Third World remained completely unknown to the rest of the world, yet lamentably, heard about themselves through others, who were either their enemies or strangers and with

whom they did not share a common language.³⁹

The Tudeh party's newspaper, *Mardom*, devoted one whole page of its four page newspaper to a critique of Shari'ati's article. Sepehr, the author of the article, 'A method which is not only wrong but destructive,' argued that driving a wedge between nationalist and communist forces, as Sham' had done in *Iran-e Azad*, was the common tactic employed by the US State Department. The author accused Sham' of being divisive and playing into the hands of colonialism while his article rendered a 'service to imperialism and the Shah and was an insult to Iranian revolutionaries'.⁴⁰

In another article, 'The arrow that ricocheted', Shari'ati argued that the government's attempt to win over the peasantry through land reform was backfiring as it had been forced to back peddle, thus enraging the peasantry. Shari'ati wrote, 'half of all Iranian peasants are now living under the same old share-cropping system and the other half are forced to pay for the land that was originally theirs, but had been subsequently expropriated from them by feudal lords such as , [Mohammad Reza] Shah and Alam, during years of dictatorship in Iran.'⁴¹ Inviting the peasantry to refrain from giving a share of their produce to the landlords and inciting them to rebellion, Shari'ati presented his view of land ownership. Based on the Islamic principle that, 'the produce belongs to the direct producer even if he has usurped the land', Shari'ati rejected any Islamic justification for the payment of rent by the peasants. He concluded that the land on which they had worked for generations, rightfully belonged to them.

The bloody uprising of June 1963 in Iran, which brought Khomeini, as the leading religious opposition figure, to the forefront, left a considerable impression on Shari'ati. For all those who believed in the overthrow of the regime through a mass movement this was a monumental event. The power of the shah had been shaken at its foundations. Shari'ati was delighted at the astuteness of the people when he heard that one of the slogans chanted by the people during the days of uprising was 'Mosaddeq our national leader and Khomeini our religious leader'.⁴² Given his belief in the Iranian-Islamic heritage, Shari'ati had no misgivings in combining the stature of Mosaddeq as the nationalist leader of the movement with that of Khomeini as the religious leader. He wrote a highly charged editorial, eulogizing the courage and bravery of all those who were cut down by the bullets of the butchers as they cried out, 'death to the shah'.⁴³ Shari'ati argued that 'even though the revolutionary feelings and ideas of the people were clearly visible ... the movement failed to reach its objective since it did not possess a centralized command, yet its results would undoubtedly have a definitive effect on the history of Iran's national movement.' Repeating what he had already written to the Executive Committee of the National Front some five months before these events, Shari'ati wrote, 'Yes! The epoch of non-violent struggle has come to an end and from now on in order to assure the vitality of the revolution and defend our nationalist slogans, the most important of which is the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Shah , we should respond to the enemy's flood of fire and steel with the

expressive language of guns and the destructive force of war.'

The title that Shari'ati had given to this article was, 'Mosaddeq, the national leader, Khomeini, the religious leader'.⁴⁴ The executive committee of the National Front in Lausanne rejected this title, arguing that Mosaddeq was the sole leader of the national movement.⁴⁵ In the June 1963 issue of *Iran-e Azad*, Shari'ati's article appeared under the heading, '!' ...' in bold. The fact that the title had been censored annoyed him. Later, he complained about the fact that his article had been altered without his knowledge.⁴⁶ Shari'ati's contention is most probably true because not once does the name of Khomeini appear in the published article. In the meantime, Shari'ati was constantly under pressure especially from one of his National Front colleagues on the editorial board who, suspicious of his religious inclinations and his sympathy for the IFM, questioned his allegiance to the National Front.

While the readership and popularity of *Iran-e Azad* increased substantially, the accumulated pressure finally led to Shari'ati's resignation. He explained his decision by referring to the fact that 'some people have without my knowledge tampered with the editorial and some of the articles'.⁴⁷ He also wrote to a friend saying that 'my cooperation is no longer sensible, since if we do not sternly confront wrongdoing, we would lose our dignity and no one would listen to us anymore. Furthermore an end would have to be put to misconduct'.⁴⁸ Having placed a great deal of faith and energy into *Iran-e Azad*, Shari'ati left it with pride in his achievement and hard feelings towards some of his colleagues. Ironically, as much as the project was a success, Shari'ati was embattled by personal bickering and what he believed were selfish jealousies. He lashed out at all shades of the political spectrum within and outside the National Front, whose sectarian interests he had come to feel constituted the grounds for their 'chicanery, stupidity, selfishness and conceitedness'.⁴⁹ Even though Shari'ati resigned from his position as the editor of *Iran-e Azad* in July, his last column of 'events and perceptions' appeared in August 1963.

The Lausanne Congress

After the divisive World Confederation of Students in Paris, representatives of all political forces tried to put on an unprecedented show of solidarity in Lausanne. The ground work for a 'Congress of Unity' had been thoughtfully prepared and this Second Congress turned out to be a success. The arrival of two student representatives from Tehran University, Jazayeri and Tavassoli added to the sense of solidarity. The slogan of 'unity, struggle and victory' which later became the motto of the students' movement was pronounced by one of the representatives from Tehran, who asked all members of the Congress to repeat this slogan three times. The official committee representing the students from Paris were Azari, Amin and Asgari.⁵⁰ This group was accompanied by Varjavand, Shari'ati, Suresrafil, Puran Shari'ati and Taji Rastin.

The Congress opened its session on the afternoon of 31 December 1962 at the Maison du Peuple. Attending, were sixty-six student representatives, nearly twenty advisors and approximately 100 guests.⁵¹ Hardly anyone other than those who accompanied or worked with him at the Congress remembers Shari'ati's presence. Except for a few short minutes, he never attended the main conference hall. He made no speeches, nor did he participate in the lobbying, socializing and politicking. During his stay at Lausanne, Shari'ati never saw the light of day. He spent his time in the basement writing and rewriting. There is general consensus that a good number of the declarations, resolutions and official messages of the Congress to dignitaries were written by him.⁵² As he recalled later, he nevertheless made time to get himself into a cafe, sit at a table, smoke his cigarette, sip his cup of coffee and stare out into the lake, carried away with his romantic thoughts.

Ali Shakeri, the student representative of Lausanne who also chaired the host committee, recalls that the famous message of the Congress to Mosaddeq was written by Shari'ati.⁵³ Among the documents that are said to be Shari'ati's work are also the final resolution of the Second Congress, its message to students in Iran, and its message to the Union of Algerian students. According to Shakeri the official written output of the Congress was mainly the work of Hamid Enayat and Ali Shari'ati. The message to Mosaddeq, written on 3 January 1963, begins by pronouncing a covenant between 'a generation which is struggling for freedom and the flag bearer who commenced this divine battle in our enchained country'.⁵⁴ It ends with the certitude that 'the young hands that are today placed between your old and sturdy hands as the proof of our pact will change the course of history in our country'.⁵⁵ In response Mosaddeq wrote: 'the poignant contents of this message moved and disturbed me greatly ... the effect of it on the reader is proof of the validity of its authors' statement'.⁵⁶

Shari'ati's contribution at the Congress was not limited to his writings. It is said that Varjavand and Shari'ati played an important role in the political bargaining that went on behind the scene.⁵⁷ The positions adopted and the important decisions made by the Executive Committee on important issues such as joining one or another international student organization, which was an issue of debate at the Congress, is said to have been in consultation with Varjavand and Shari'ati.⁵⁸ Shari'ati also attended the International Relations Committee of the Confederation.⁵⁹ One of the most important issues before this committee was to determine the position of the Confederation in relation to the border clashes between China and India. Shari'ati who had always considered Gandhi and Nehru as India's Mosaddeqs and firmly believed in that country's non-aligned position, had strong feelings on this issue. He had already condemned China's act of aggression against India in an article in *Iran-e Azad*.⁶⁰ A resolution written by him, condemning China was presented to the Committee. The student partisans of the Tudeh party, led by Parviz Nikkhah, opposed this resolution and tried to block it. After long debates, Shari'ati's resolution was adopted and was included as the seventh article of the report of the Committee on International Relations.⁶¹

After his return from Lausanne, Shari'ati wrote a detailed report on the Congress and the activities of its committees and its declarations and messages in *Iran-e Azad*.⁶² At the end of his article he congratulated all students in and out of Iran for its success. This was the last Confederation of Iranian Students' Congress Shari'ati was to participate in. Even though, during the next Congress held in London between 31 December 1963 and 3 January 1964, Shari'ati was still in Paris, he refused to attend. After his disappointment with *Iran-e Azad*, he sulked and even refused to go to the National Front Congress scheduled for 15 August 1963, at Mainz. Explaining his decision, he later wrote, 'my nerves cannot stand this childish bickering and in this respect I have been raised as a weakling. Perhaps my decision not to go to the Congress and to abandon my responsibility at *Iran-e Azad* may not be in our interest, but this is not just an issue of expediency it is an issue of psychological and nervous power and stamina.'⁶³ It would be incorrect to assume that Shari'ati wished to free himself of his political obligations to get along with his studies because by August 1963, he had already submitted his doctorate and obtained his degree.

Schooling in Paris

'One of the most magnificent and unforgettable periods of my life'

Shari'ati's educational interests in Paris were based on two very different kinds of reasoning, employed two different methods and produced different results. This situation was imposed on him by the bureaucratic inflexibility of the Office of Student Supervision. Back in 1955, during his first year at the Faculty of Literature in Mashhad, he had told Jala'eddin Farsi that he did not wish to end up as a school teacher, like his father.¹ He always intended to teach at university and for this was obliged to obtain a doctorate. Reason and passion could have been combined had he been allowed to study sociology rather than literature. As it was, Shari'ati treated his doctorate of literature as a functional and mechanical obligation. For the rest, without necessarily registering for courses, and through auditing the courses that interested him, he created an academic programme tailor-made to his own particular interests. As an *élève titulaire*, he could attend the courses he wished without being in a programme nor getting credit towards a degree.

A Classical Education

Shari'ati's path to his doctorate was clear. At the time, foreign students could either opt for a *doctorat d'état*, as French students were obliged to do, or enroll for a *doctorat d'Université*, open only to foreign students. Clearly the *doctorat d'état* required a more rigorous and voluminous dissertation and was more difficult to obtain. At the time, the Iranian government allowed students to choose whichever type of doctorate they wished and gave both the same standing in Iran. To Shari'ati, the question of writing a *doctorat d'état* or *d'Université* probably never posed itself. He was looking for the shortest and most direct way possible to obtain his certificate.

After his return from Iran at the end of the summer of 1960, Shari'ati went to register for his doctorate and look for a research director in the field of Persian language and literature. He approached Professor Gilbert Lazard who he asked to suggest a project which would culminate in a doctorate.² Lazard knew of a text in

Persian at the National Library in Paris, called *Fazayel-e Balkh* or 'The Merits of Balkh' written by Safi al-Din Balkhi. He proposed that Shari'ati should correct, comment on and translate the text into French.³ In France this type of project was normal for a doctoral dissertation and remains so to this day. Shari'ati set himself to work. Lazard recalls that contrary to Puran, who was very much interested in her thesis on Sa'di's *Golestan*, Ali's project did not interest him.⁴ During Shari'ati's progress reports to Lazard, his astute professor came to discover an uncomfortable reality. What interested Lazard did not interest Shari'ati and what interested Shari'ati did not interest Lazard.⁵ According to Lazard, Shari'ati had a working knowledge of French. He read, wrote and spoke the language, even though he 'may not have been excellent at them'.⁶

In June 1963, nearly a year before he went to Iran, and just before his disputes at *Iran-e Azad*, Shari'ati handed in 115 type-written pages of the translated text, including bibliography and notes, and 113 pages of a corrected Persian text. The translation was preceded by a nine-page introduction in which Shari'ati argued that the text shed light on the material and cultural life of Balkh through the biography of the scholars treated in the text. He also made reference to the fact that the biographies were written from an exclusively religious (Hanafi) point of view. Shari'ati also pointed out that this text was written during a period when Islam had consolidated its social and spiritual power.⁷ 'The quality of the thesis was not excellent,' recalled Lazard, 'but then again in those days standards were different.'⁸ On 21 June 1963, Shari'ati's thesis was accepted by a jury of scholars with a grade of passable, the lowest passing grade possible.⁹

Shari'ati's thesis was written for the Faculté Des Lettres et Sciences Humaines of the Sorbonne. It was natural, therefore, that if a thesis was written, for example, in sociology or history, it would have also been issued by the same Faculty. On Shari'ati's official doctorate diploma, as was the case with all such diplomas at the time, there is no particular rubric under which either the title of the doctorate nor the field in which it was written, would be registered. However, under the bold title of Doctorat de L'Université de Paris, the handwriting filling the entire official document had written 'Histoire de L'Islam medieval', followed by the notation, '(hagiographie Persane)'. It could, therefore, have been inferred that Shari'ati's field of study or the subject of his thesis was the 'History of Medieval Islam'. The fact that the 'Merits of Balkh' was a historical account of life in medieval Balkh may explain the hand written explanation on Shari'ati's diploma.

Again chance or divine providence had come to Shari'ati's rescue. Shari'ati, who knew that with a doctorate in Persian literature from a foreign university he would not be allowed to teach at the university level, had obtained an official statement affirming that his field of study or his thesis topic was related to the history of medieval Islam. When asked what he thought Shari'ati's thesis topic was about, Professor Lazard could only say that in those days the lines of distinction were not very clear; he would neither call his thesis one in the field of history nor sociology, but probably that of Islamic or Oriental studies.¹⁰ Later, on 12 March 1964, some

three months before the Shari'ati family headed back home, the cultural attaché of the Iranian embassy certified Shari'ati's doctorate and considered it as equivalent to a University doctorate in Literature, not Persian literature.¹¹ It is important to point out that the embassy had no choice but to define the degree as 'Literature' because as a student who had his BA in literature he was obliged to follow the same field. This was the catch twenty-two Shari'ati was originally confronted with. However, certain that with the comment of 'History of Medieval Islam' on his official degree he would be able to convince the authorities back in Iran that his degree was in history, Shari'ati prepared for his trip back home.

The Genuine Fountain of Knowledge

For someone wishing to observe, reflect, learn and discuss, Paris of the 1960s was at the cutting edge of many major debates in the humanities and social sciences. The order of the day was not one of discussion and debate behind the closed doors of stuffy elitist men's clubs, but of a public exchange of ideas. Selected Parisian cafés in the Montparnasse and St Germain areas bustled with the presence of towering international literary figures, poets, artists, philosophers and sociologists who squeezed around crowded tables, read their works, presented their ideas and debated them. Anyone interested could hang around, listen, interject and even debate. For a regular, formal and perhaps more systematic presentation, it only sufficed to walk into the readily accessible university auditoriums, where the city's academic luminaries lectured. To one who sought knowledge, Paris was a veritable free university – a center of intellectual enlightenment, critique and social awakening. Those who drank from this genuine fountain of knowledge readily shrugged at having to forego the 'bourgeois' recompense of a formal degree.

Paris was the city of films, plays, concerts, intellectual journals and newspapers. It was also an arena for the exchange of ideas between people of different cultures and intellectuals of different persuasions. What Shari'ati learnt from his African fellow students about the socio-political conditions of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia or the Congo at the University's Restaurant Musulman was very different, but probably no less eye-opening, than the words of Jean Paul Sartre or Simone de Beauvoir at Coupole or Select. In those days, the miracle of Paris was that sometimes different people could find their particular intellectual wants satisfied in one or another unexpected corner of the city. In 1962, Shari'ati, for example, attended a lecture by Sartre on Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* at Restaurant Musulman located in the boulevard Saint Michel.¹²

After a lunch costing them just over one French franc, Shari'ati and his Iranian friends – Harati, Asgari, Mozaffari, Tavassoli, Suresrafil and Alavi – would converge for a cup of coffee at a café near the Luxembourg gardens to chat and exchange ideas on the latest political news from home.¹³ While some conversed, others read whatever they had to read before they walked off to their two-thirty class. Shari'ati,

who was an ardent *Le Monde* reader and had it always tucked under his arm, would read his paper as he chain-smoked his Royal cigarettes. Flipping over the pages of *Le Monde* in 1963 it becomes evident how much one could learn by thoroughly reading this newspaper.

During his stay in Paris, Shari'ati came into contact with many others who influenced his perception of life and world-outlook: militants, philosophers, academics, artists, poets, musicians and even shopkeepers. He attended their lectures, read their works, observed their art, listened to their music, sometimes discussed with them and absorbed their different teachings and messages. Sometimes circumstances forced upon him encounters that he seldom forgot. On 14 February 1961 students of all colours, but mainly Africans, converged on one of the northern angles of Place de l'Etoile and gathered in front of the Belgian Embassy to protest the brutal murder of Patrice Lumumba. In the ever-growing crowd was Ali Shari'ati, who later referred to the multi-nationality of the crowd and wrote that on that day he came to the realization that 'a nation is the sum total of all human beings who feel a common pain.'¹⁴ After the angry students attacked the Embassy, police rounded up a good number of them. According to his own account, Shari'ati, who was among those arrested, spent a few nights at Paris' central police headquarters at the Cité.¹⁵ Shari'ati provides a relatively detailed account of his discussions in prison – politics, religion and the tug of war between Islam and Christianity – with a Christian Tanganyikan student of politics, whom he calls Guioz.¹⁶

It seems as though, throughout his stay in Paris and particularly during the academic year of 1960–61 and then during the academic year of 1963–64, Shari'ati attended the lectures of a handful of professors, whom he had for one reason or another singled out as interesting and worthwhile. In a highly controversial article entitled 'My Idols', which was later used against him by his clerical enemies, Shari'ati eulogized his Western teachers in an exaggerated if not adulatory manner. While he assimilated the new information he was exposed to and synthesized various concepts and ideas, the works and views of five figures in particular left a deep impression on him. Louis Massignon, George Gurvitch, Jacques Berque, Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre each fascinated him to different degrees and for different reasons.

Massignon

Shari'ati is said to have been research assistant to the renowned French Catholic Islamologist Louis Massignon between 1960 and 1962.¹⁷ During the last years of his life, Massignon worked on a biography of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter and Imam Ali's wife. Shari'ati relates that he collaborated with Massignon on this project and was responsible for collecting, reading and translating Persian language documents on Fatima's life.¹⁸ In 1972, back in Iran, in the opening sentence of his long,

poetic and emotional lecture on the life and personality of Fatima, Shari'ati expressed his debt to Massignon and paid homage to him stating humbly that his lecture was only a report on Massignon's work and his findings.¹⁹ This very popular lecture, in which Shari'ati eulogized the position of women in Islam was later published under the title of *Fatima is Fatima*.

Between 1960 and 1962 Shari'ati developed a sense of quasi-adoration for Massignon. Most probably, Shari'ati visited Massignon's home at rue Monsieur, where after his retirement from his remarkable academic career, he worked and received students, friends and guests. Daniel Massignon, Louis Massignon's son, vaguely remembers Shari'ati's visits to his father's house and even has a faint memory of Shari'ati and his father discussing Salman-e Farsi.²⁰ On the basis of Massignon's well kept, yet unpublished, daily record of his appointments and conversations, Daniel confirms that between 1960 and 1962 there are a few entries of telephone conversations between his father and a Mr Shrat, which he maintains is the way his father wrote Shari'ati, in his own cryptic and coded shorthand style.²¹ Destremau and Moncelon, Massignon's biographers, also confirm that Shari'ati assisted Massignon in his research especially on Fatima between 1960 and 1962.²²

Whatever the extent of their contact, Louis Massignon, had an irrefutable influence on Shari'ati. Thanking God for having encountered such a man, Shari'ati shuddered at the thought of not having met him and wrote, 'Had I not seen him, what an impoverished spirit, mediocre mind and stale vision would I have had.'²³ Considering the encounter as a 'happening', Shari'ati wonders if it were really a mere 'accident'. Shari'ati seems to imply divine intervention.²⁴ At the age of twenty-five, travelling on the river Tigres, Massignon had also had a vision. In front of Taqi-Kasra, a 'mystical man' a 'Seyyed wearing a green turban' had appeared to him and read him 'verses from the Qur'an'.²⁵ It was this vision which had completely changed Massignon's life. Just as the young Frenchman had been lured to the proximity of Taqi-Kasra to have his life transformed through the vision of a holy man, Shari'ati had been called from Taqi-Kasra to Paris to have his life transformed by visiting the chosen man. Just as a Muslim had initiated and truly touched the Christian and rekindled his faith in his own religion, it seemed as if the Christian had rekindled the faith of the Muslim in his religion. Massignon, the Christian wayfarer, had become the pir, the spiritual mentor of Shari'ati the Muslim. Chance or divine providence? Both men truly believed that their exceptional experience was the will of God.

To demonstrate the spiritual significance of his meeting with Massignon, to whom he sometimes refers as the enigmatic Solange Bodin, Shari'ati compares it to the encounter between Shams-e Tabrizi and Mowlana.²⁶ For Shari'ati, Massignon was a 'thunderbolt' that struck him just as Shams had struck Mowlana.²⁷ Shari'ati the iconoclast and authentic monotheist, acknowledged a spiritual leader, as all Sufis do; yet his was a Christian zealot and not a Muslim. It is important to realise that Massignon's mystical and gnostic influence on Shari'ati was not truly felt by Shari'ati until after his return to Iran. He was exposed to the 'thunderbolt' but

apparently only experienced its effects years later. Referring to his own strictly political and militant state of mind in Paris he maintains that he discovered and appreciated Massignon's influence on himself during his gnostic period.²⁸ Solange Bodin, he tells us, was resurrected some nine years after her death – perhaps the nine-year interlude between Shari'ati's encounter with Massignon and his subsequent impregnation with Massignon's gnostic ideas and his own mystical experience. This was the incubation period of Shari'ati's revived interest in Sufism. It is not Massignon nor Solange Bodin who are resurrected; they are but symbols for the gnostic ideas and views which Massignon rekindled in Shari'ati.

Massignon's monotheistic concept of the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam as different branches of the same common spiritual source and foundation, left an undeniable mark on Shari'ati's view of religion. To Massignon, all three religions were the children of the same father, Abraham. Those who had faith in any one were no less than brothers to others. Massignon had persisted in his view of the unity of Abrahamic religions to the extent that some denounced him as a lover of Islam and a traitor to Europe and Christianity. Already influenced by Mowlavi's similar message, Shari'ati embraced the Abrahamic view of religions, which urged believers to transcend the sectarian petty differences separating them from other faiths and invited them to search for greater common denominators among themselves. It is interesting that back in Iran, Shari'ati's perception of Abrahamic religions made him the target of the same kind of invectives thrown at Massignon, but from the official guardians of Shi'i piety.

Inspired by Massignon's deeply felt compassion for the poor and the oppressed and his belief in justice as a fundamental religious principle, Shari'ati ascribed a socio-political mission to all monotheists and true believers of any of the Abrahamic religions. In 1971, Shari'ati said, "To understand the spirit of all monotheistic religions one has to learn about Abraham."²⁹ Later in 1972, he went further and said, "In reality Islam is the doctrine that Abraham introduced, if one regards Islamology from this perspective, it contains Christianity, Judaism and Islam ... Thus Islam is one religion in different manifestations."³⁰ Having established the unity of all Abrahamic religions, Shari'ati explained Abraham's act of smashing the idols as an act of eradicating all socio-economic injustices and discriminations. The social expression of monotheism, Shari'ati argued, was the establishment of unity among mankind through the uprooting of 'class differences'.³¹ Abraham, he suggested, rebelled against the 'deceitful religious authorities who upheld the unjust and exploitative class-based status quo'.³² What made the Abrahamic religions different from all others, according to Shari'ati, was that their Prophets were chosen among the meek and as soon as they were appointed by God, they rallied the poor to their cause and began the struggle against the rich and the oppressors.³³ Shari'ati's addendum to Massignon's original idea was typical of his method of incorporating an idea, reinterpreting it, and transforming it into a potent tool for political action.

Shari'ati was also impressed by Massignon's strong personality. Even in old age Massignon took firm political positions on issues of social justice. He had long

fought against racial discrimination at home and for the freedom of political prisoners in the French colonies. He supported the Algerian cause and in the Spring of 1960 was arrested for participating in a sit-in in favour of Algerians incarcerated without a trial. In Shari'ati's eyes, Massignon was a great spirit and a perfect human being. He was proud of his love and fascination for the man and had no desire to hide it. In more than one way he told his readers that Massignon, the Christian Orientalist was his spiritual master and guide in his gnostic quest. Ironically, whereas Westerners embarking on spiritual quests turn to the East, Shari'ati the upholder of the Iranian-Islamic national culture, became the devout follower of a special Westerner. Bani-Sadr recalls that shortly after he arrived in Paris in November 1963, Shari'ati referred to Massignon's work and research on Fatima and spoke highly of him. Bani-Sadr, who did not know of Massignon, had inquired about him and having learnt that he was an Orientalist had retorted that, 'Orientalism is a kind of charlatanism'. Shari'ati is said to have responded, 'this one is very different'.³⁴

Gurvitch

Shari'ati fell under the influence of George Gurvitch, his professor of sociology at the Sorbonne, in a totally different fashion. Shari'ati came to respect Gurvitch as a human being, a professor and a scholar. From a human point of view, he admired the courage and political commitment of this militant Jewish-Russian émigré. According to Shari'ati, as a young communist, Gurvitch was Lenin and Trotsky's comrade in arms. After the rise of Stalin to power he had fallen out with the Soviet leadership and had fled to Europe, where Fascists and Stalinist communists had put a prize on his head.³⁵ Shari'ati recalled the day Gurvitch received a letter from the OAS, the outlawed French Organization of the Secret Army which had vowed to continue the anti-independence war in Algeria, threatening him with death for his anti-colonial position in Algeria. According to Shari'ati, the old man had defiantly told the students attending his class that he would not stop his fight against those who denied Algeria its independence.³⁶ In Gurvitch, Shari'ati found not only a knowledgeable professor and an intellectual but also a responsible crusader against injustice. For him, the combination of these two features, defined the ideal intellectual and he later referred to Gurvitch as a model to be emulated. In 1972, when Shari'ati came under considerable attack from the traditional clergy, he wrote a defiant, almost sacrilegious, letter to his father in which he differentiated between the essence and form of Shi'ism suggesting, provocatively, that Gurvitch the Jewish ex-communist, who had spent all his life fighting against Fascism, Stalinist dictatorship and French colonialism in Algeria was closer to the spirit of Shi'ism than Ayatollah Milani, one of Iran's principal sources of imitation (*maraj'a-ye taqlid*), who had never engaged himself in any just struggle.³⁷ Applying his own concept of the unity of Abrahamic religions, Shari'ati's statement made perfect

sense. A Jewish crusader for social and economic justice was a monotheistic religious brother to Shari'ati the Shi'a, while the pious source of imitation, Milani, who justified and upheld the exploitative and oppressive status quo, was a polytheist foe.

Shari'ati also owed an important part of his Western intellectual formation to Gurvitch. He conscientiously and regularly attended Gurvitch's classes during his five-year stay in Paris.³⁸ He recalled that his classmates considered him as a devout disciple of Gurvitch and a 'Gurvitchologist' and teased him by poking fun at his mentor.³⁹ Gurvitch at times jumbled his speech and his thick Russian accent must have provided plenty of ground for students' jokes; but to Shari'ati he was a 'genius sociologist of world stature'.⁴⁰

Gurvitch's lectures exposed Shari'ati to a wide variety of renowned Marxian and non-Marxian intellectuals and sociologists. In his lectures, he began by analysing sociological concepts from a Marxian perspective, he then presented the non-Marxian view and at the end provided his own view of such concepts. The content of Gurvitch's *Etudes sur les Classes Sociales*, which is composed of lectures he delivered at the Sorbonne before his death in 1966, indicates that Shari'ati received a thorough and up-to-date account of the sociological views and debates of his time. From Gurvitch, who continued to espouse the essentials of Marx's sociological method, he learnt not only about Marx and Engels, but about different Marxists, from Bernstein and Kautsky to Lenin, Bukharin and Lucas. In Gurvitch's classes, probably for the first time in his life, Shari'ati heard about different sociological schools of thought as well as such luminaries as Vilfredo Pareto and Max Weber to whom he later often gave references. From Gurvitch, he learnt the scholarly art of presenting an idea or a concept irrespective of one's belief in it. But most important of all, Shari'ati adopted Gurvitch's view that Marx's sociological construction, and especially his analysis of social classes, contained many truisms and as such remained useful. Yet it also possessed many contradictions and imperfections. Gurvitch believed that a more comprehensive definition of social classes necessitated the use of a greater number of characteristics on the basis of which one defined social classes. He argued that by defining social classes and their comportment only on the basis of economic factors, Marx minimized the influence of social psychology and cultural specificities on the behaviour of social classes in different countries. This oversight, Gurvitch believed, was a major deficiency of the Marxist methodology.

Gurvitch demonstrated that one could employ Marx's general methodological framework yet criticize certain aspects of his constructs. To Shari'ati, who wished to interpret and reinterpret the knowledge that he received according to his own perception, the possibility of revising Marx on the basis of one's own independent judgement and yet remaining within the progressive camp was reassuring. Furthermore, Shari'ati welcomed Gurvitch's invitation to broaden Marx's essentially one-dimensional definition of classes. In 1969, Shari'ati's unconventional definition of classes incorporated Gurvitch's teachings. In one of his very few written

works, Shari'ati argued that social classes were either the effect of economic and material conditions of social life or the effect of religious and popular beliefs.⁴¹ Shari'ati's incorporation of religious and popular beliefs into his model of social classes could be considered as a variation of Gurvitch's concept of 'social psychology' and 'cultural specificities'. His either/or condition was, however, an attempt at simultaneously employing a Marxian and a Weberian notion. Later, he reverted to a more Gurvitchian definition of classes based on economic and social conditions in addition to religious and popular beliefs.

Gurvitch's anti-Stalinism must have reinforced Shari'ati's anti-Sovietism. Long before he arrived in Paris, Shari'ati was opposed to the Tudeh party and its Soviet motherland. Paris provided him with the opportunity to read about the history of socialism and prominent socialist thinkers. At his humble home, he is said to have had a good number of books on socialism or by socialist writers.⁴² In Paris, exposed to the ideas of other founders of socialism, he came to identify increasingly with Proudhon's moralistic conception of socialism. He was already familiar with Proudhon,⁴³ but now his attraction to the thinker deepened. His socialism was indeed much closer to Proudhon than to Marx.⁴⁴ Back in Iran he would often quote Proudhon against Marx.⁴⁵ In Paris he regularly invoked Proudhon's arguments when he criticized the extremely centralized Soviet state and its étatist political and economic system.⁴⁶ Shari'ati derided the Soviet Communist system for its stifling of individual initiative, regimentation of life and its state capitalist economy. Arguing that all the evils of capitalism continued to exist in the Soviet Union, Shari'ati often remarked, 'One cannot build a paradise against the people's will'.⁴⁷

Berque

From Shari'ati's account of his mentors, or as he calls them his 'idols', it would be safe to say that Jacques Berque, the prominent French Islamologist also left a deep impression on him. During the academic year of 1963–64, after Shari'ati obtained his doctorate, he audited Berque's class on the Sociology of Islam. The small class of about ten was held at Berque's office at the College de France. Nasser Pakdaman, who had been Berque's student since 1960 and had subsequently become his research assistant, remembers that, at the time, he and Shari'ati were the only Iranians attending Berque's class.⁴⁸ During the academic year, students were required to give a presentation on a relevant topic and Shari'ati's was on the Salafiyya, a movement which vied to revive the principles of the original or authentic Muslims of the Prophets' time.⁴⁹

By early 1964, Shari'ati had become fairly close to Berque. At this time he was approached by his political friends to secure the membership of Berque in the overseas 'Committee for the Defence of Iranian Political Prisoners', which was in the process of being constituted. Bani-Sadr recalls that Shari'ati knew Berque well

enough at the time to arrange for a meeting with him at the College de France. Berque welcomed Shari'ati and Bani-Sadr affectionately and suggested that it would be very useful if they could get Sartre to accept the presidency of the 'Committee' in France.⁵⁰ Later, acting on Berque's suggestion, Sartre's participation was solicited and he accepted. Bani-Sadr also recalls that Shari'ati once gave him a letter from Berque concerning the organization and business of the 'Committee.'

In a bold statement, given his own religious background, Shari'ati referred to Berque as he who 'showed me what religion was and who revealed to me how one could observe the world through a sociological perspective. This very important lesson resulted in the transformation of a hundred thousand useless facts that I had learnt here [in Iran] to useful and important concepts.'⁵¹ This transformation process, Shari'ati wrote, 'has a long story'. The alchemy of rendering useful otherwise futile concepts, which Berque taught him, was based on the concept of *degré de signification* – the degree of signification, or real meaning of words. It was Shari'ati's understanding and interpretation of this concept, elaborated in one of Berque's classes, that provided him with what was probably his most novel and momentous idea.

From Shari'ati's point of view, by degree of signification of words, Berque meant that even though words had a unique and eternal meaning, their purpose and intent was subject to change within a given margin during different periods and under different circumstances.⁵² Words could thus be transformed from passive means for idle chatter and tools of stupefaction into instruments for socio-political change. Berque had ignited something in Shari'ati. He took each commonly used term in the vocabulary of every Muslim and reinterpreted it until gentle lullabies became electric currents. Words and concepts resonating with resignation, fatalism and self-pity in the historical memory of Iranian Shi'i, were suddenly transformed into forceful and dynamic concepts for action. In his profound and radical re-interpretation of Islamic concepts Shari'ati raised the phoenix from its ashes. Endowed with a philosophically and socio-politically relevant, modern and change-oriented characteristic, monotheism, polytheism, religion, Shi'ism, prayer, pilgrimage, justice, equity, intercession, occultation and even tenacity of belief (*ta'asob*), became meaningful and useful concepts for millions of intellectuals raised in Muslim families.

Fanon

The work of Frantz Fanon, especially *The Wretched of the Earth*, excited Shari'ati because it forcefully and eloquently stated his own convictions. Addressing citizens of the Third World, Fanon wrote, 'Let us decide not to imitate Europe; let us combine our muscles and our brains in a new direction. Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth.'⁵³ Fanon reinforced Shari'ati's firm belief that the colonized or semi-colonized Third

World person had to return to himself, delve back into his own historico-cultural tradition, search for the appropriate and endogenous elements and materials and then create 'a new man' based on 'a new idea' and 'a new history'. In Paris, Shari'ati and his political friends, Asgari, Harati and Alavi were so impressed by the message of *The Wretched of the Earth* that they decided to divide the chapters of the book among themselves and collectively translate it into Persian.⁵⁴ Later, this collective effort was published in Iran under the name of Shari'ati alone – the publisher must have felt that Shari'ati's name would increase his sales. It is said that having translated Fanon's *Five Years of the Algerian War (A Dying Colonialism)* Shari'ati invited him to write a preface to it, which never materialized.⁵⁵ Fanon and Shari'ati did, however, correspond and exchange ideas over the role of Islam in the broad anti-colonial war. Shari'ati refers to three letters between the two men in which Fanon expressed some misgivings over the schismatic role of religion in the broad anti-colonial front.⁵⁶ In his writings and lectures back in Iran, Shari'ati made numerous references to the conclusion of Fanon's, *Wretched of the Earth*, which he had translated in Paris.

Sartre

Sartre's ideas, especially on existentialism, became an important source of inspiration for Shari'ati. Sartre's concept of the individual's freedom, the difficult task of choice, the subsequent responsibility and commitment that choice imposes, the universality of the individual's singular decision, and finally the individual's right to rebel, became an integral part of Shari'ati's discourse and ideology. In Paris, Shari'ati had felt the forceful impact and influence of Sartre's ideas on the young and had come to appreciate its dynamic and change-initiating powers. Sartre's attempt at reconciling existentialism with Marxism and humanism in 1960 indicated the possibility and usefulness of bridge-building and fusion between doctrines. Acknowledging their importance, and therefore the necessity of incorporating them, Shari'ati said 'the intellectual and cultural air in which a Muslim of this century breathed was enclosed within the triangle of socialism, existentialism and Islam.'⁵⁷

In comparison with dialectical materialism, Marxism, determinism, nihilism and naturalism, Shari'ati praised existentialism as the 'worthiest of all doctrines'.⁵⁸ However, he argued that Sartre's existentialism – based on materialism and atheism on the one hand and freedom of action on the other – would fail to secure his objective of human felicity. Rejecting Sartre's criteria of *bon sens* or common sense as a useful guide for allowing 'human beings to create themselves as gods', Shari'ati argued that without a clear concept of right and wrong, good and evil, the end result of individuals' free acts may not, as Sartre expected, be the ascendance and perfection of individuals and society but their demise and fall.⁵⁹ The absence of an ethical and moral guide for individual action constituted the greatest deficiency

of Sartre's doctrine.⁶⁰ For Shari'ati, the inclusion of faith in God removed all the shortcomings of Sartre's 'materialist' existentialism. God provided the ideal criteria for making correct decisions and belief in Him, dispelled the anxiety caused by the riddle of existence and forlornness. Shari'ati presented the arguments of religious existentialists while conceding that he was not the first of them.⁶¹ The superiority of existentialism over other Western doctrines, according to Shari'ati, flowed from its firm belief in the fact that 'human beings are free, responsible for their acts and the architects as well as masters of their own essence.'⁶² Shari'ati believed that he could philosophically reconcile the libertarian concept of freedom of action, which he personally valued, with binding Islamic precepts. In Iran, Shari'ati declared: 'My reliance on religion is such that an intellectual with no religious sentiments could become my fellow-traveller and rely on my message.'⁶³

Theoretical Bridge-building

In Paris Shari'ati had come to realize that an effective revolutionary and modern social discourse necessitated the blending of existentialism and socialism with Islam. The language and jargon of these two Western schools of thought had gradually become the prevalent common language and denominator of Western intellectuals. Shari'ati was aware of the fact that these schools had also made headway in Iran and if his particular discourse was to fall on receptive ears back home, his message had to incorporate the major ideas and themes elaborated by these doctrines. Shari'ati sought to prove that Shi'i Islam already possessed the quintessence of all Western progressive schools of thought. In Paris he rediscovered Islam through the works and ideas of Western intellectuals whose progressive message was presented as the mirror-image of authentic Islam. Shari'ati's task was to brush aside the dust gathered on the mirror for people to see what he believed to be the real source of the image, Islam. 'All that Pascal, Marx and Sartre contributed in Europe could be found in Shi'ism under the name of Ali,' he wrote.⁶⁴ Whether Shari'ati truly believed in this proposition or had adopted it as a useful argument to defend himself against the accusation of eclecticism is impossible to determine.

On numerous Saturday mornings, between 1962 and 1964, Shari'ati, Homa Nateq and one or two other friends met at a café called *Au Départ* at Saint Germain.⁶⁵ The main subject of their meeting was Seyyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, on whom Nateq was doing research. Nateq recalls that Shari'ati was interested in Asadabadi as a pioneer of Islamic revivalism and constantly asked questions about his political life and his Islamic ideas. Shari'ati was most curious about Asadabadi's membership in the Free Masons and asked factual historical questions about it.⁶⁶ At one of these meetings, Nateq recalls that their discussions gravitated towards political issues and, in his gentle manner, Shari'ati argued that leftists always talked about the people and the masses, yet if they were to go to a village and preach unity between the toilers, peasants and workers, the villagers would ask them for

the source or reference of their message. If they were to say, 'Qala Marx', or Marx said so, they would be immediately kicked out of the village; but, he said, 'if I were to go in and call on them to unite and avenge the blood of Hossein, the message would be readily understood and accepted.'⁶⁷ Shari'ati argued that Shi'i Islam was flexible and capable of dynamic adaptation. Nateq recalled that in a lecture that Shari'ati delivered at Madame Hellegu's Association Franco-Persian on Islam and Marxism, his main theme was that Islam had articulated all progressive ideas well before they were elaborated by modern western intellectuals.

The Islamic Alternative

Before returning to Iran Shari'ati became convinced that Islam constituted the most effective medium of communication with his compatriots. The central intellectual issue he had to settle for himself was the extent to which Islam as a doctrine and a religion was capable of providing relevant and appropriate solutions to present social, political and economic problems. If the true message of Islam was reflected in the sermons of the Iranian clergy however superior it was as a means of communication, its content could not have been reconciled with a modern and progressive socio-political discourse. The solution to Shari'ati's dilemma was to delve into Islam's primary sources. It would be impossible to determine whether through such research Shari'ati objectively sought to discover the true message and applicability of Islam or whether he had his preconceived results before he undertook his research. The problem posed itself as follows: was Islam a truly revolutionary ideology smothered and obscured throughout centuries by the upholders of the evil trinity of economic exploitation, political oppression and religious deceit or was it primarily a belief-system the social and economic aspects of which were negligible and at best outmoded?

Some seven months before Shari'ati left Paris, Abolhasan Bani-Sadr, a member of the National Front who was actively involved in student politics, arrived in the city.⁶⁸ In Iran, Bani-Sadr was told by members of the Iran Freedom Movement that Shari'ati was returning to Iran and that he had to replace him in Paris. On 23 November 1963, Bani-Sadr arrived in Paris with a letter for Shari'ati from IFM members and the two men met for the first time. Soon they came to spend long hours discussing the content of Islam and its relevance as a modern and progressive ideology. At Bani-Sadr's home in Gentilly, Shari'ati would talk on this topic into the early hours of the morning while he piled his cigarette butts into his unfinished cup of tea. Shari'ati argued that the Islam presented by the clergy was a finger-deep ocean in which it was impossible to swim. In jest, he is said to have commented, 'because of our Islamic beliefs we did not take advantage of worldly delights, we might as well find out whether it was worth such sacrifices'.

From the discussions between Shari'ati and Bani-Sadr the necessity of a project on 'what is Islam?' became all too evident. Two topics of research were distinguished.

The first dealt with the analysis and critique of the practice of Islam by the clergy and the people throughout the years and the second dealt with a study of the original sources of Islam from which guidelines, doctrine and policy could be inferred. Work had to be done on both topics simultaneously to compare Islam, as it was practised or clerical Islam, with Islam of the Qur'an. The comparison provided the two men with the information they needed in order to chart their future socio-political position and activities. Either Islam as practised by the clergy was firmly based on the message of the original Islam as preached and practised by the Prophet, or the Islam of the clergy was a distortion of the real Islam. If, Bani-Sadr recalls, their research proved that the clergy were faithful practitioners of the authentic Islam they had decided to abandon their attempt to present Islam as a modern alternative doctrine.⁶⁹ In case it was proven that Islam's progressive and liberating message had been obscured by the clergy, they decided to revive the authentic Islam, presenting it as an alternative ideology.

Dividing the task between them, Shari'ati agreed that he would make a critical study of the practice of Islam throughout the years, while Bani-Sadr conducted research on primary sources.⁷⁰ According to Bani-Sadr, each started work immediately. It was agreed that Shari'ati would continue his work back in Iran and that they would communicate their results to each other. Once Shari'ati was in Iran, however, each pursued their work without any regular exchange of ideas.

We know the result of Shari'ati's studies. Later in Iran, in his first lesson on 'Eslamology' at Hosseiniyeh Ershad, he distinguished between two different methods of sociological research.⁷¹ He explained that the pre-scientific method was normative and therefore based on preconceived value-judgemental notions. The scientific and positive method of enquiry, he argued, was the anti-thesis of the politically-committed approach. It was not based on what should or ought to be, but on 'the fact of the matter'. This modern method was hypothetically free of all prejudice and value-judgement. But to Shari'ati the positivist approach absolved social scientists of social responsibility, thus rendering them pawns in the hands of the people's enemies.⁷² Confronted with the instrumentalization or neutrality of social science, Shari'ati presented an alternative, which he had adopted during his research on 'what is Islam': 'before conducting research, scientists should be free of any fixed opinions, yet after their research they should become committed to their findings.'⁷³ Implicitly acknowledging what had happened, or wished had happened during his research, he argued that 'the research and not the researcher should demonstrate the truth and subsequently this proven reality should become the researcher's "belief", for the scientist should consider himself responsible towards his own knowledge and his people.'⁷⁴ Shari'ati had come to the conclusion that the Islam of the clergy and the masses was incompatible with what he believed to be the authentic, revolutionary and progressive Islam of the Qur'an and the Prophet. Through the application of his reasoning, which he argued in the same lecture to be Islamically justified, he set out to exorcize Islam of what he believed to be the ideological impurities injected in it through the years.

Homeward Bound

When he decided to return to Iran Shari'ati's poor financial situation meant that he could not fly the family home. Friends informed him that Firuz Partovi, a political activist in the United States, would soon be in Europe and planned to travel to Iran by land. Partovi, who had bought a Mercedes 320 in Germany and was travelling alone, offered to take the Shari'ati family with him. During the very early morning hours of 2 June 1964, Shari'ati, his wife Puran, his four-year-old son Ehsan, his one-year-old daughter Susan (Zahra) and his four-month-old daughter Sara, accompanied by Partovi arrived at the Iranian border post of Bazargan. Here, officials realized that an instruction dating back to 1962 had prohibited the departure of Shari'ati from Iran. The out-dated instruction was sufficient proof that he was a politically undesirable element whose status had to be cleared by the security forces. Ali was separated from his family and sent by a special bus to Maku. Partovi, who insisted on staying with the Shari'ati family, followed Ali to Maku and from there to Khoi. Realizing the precarious position that they were all in, on the road to Maku, Puran and Partovi decided to destroy the politically sensitive pamphlets and newspapers that they had brought with them. Numerous issues of *Iran-e Azad* were torn up and buried under the bank of a river along the road. A suitcase full of Partovi's 'subversive' books which he had brought with him from the United States was, however, left intact in the back of the car. At Khoi, Partovi too was arrested for his previous anti-governmental activities and both men were sent to Rezaiyeh. Three days after crossing the Iranian border, the whole party, including Shari'ati's wife and children, accompanied by two armed officials, arrived at Tehran. Partovi and Shari'ati were first allowed a very short visit to their families and were then turned over to the Shahr bani prison from where they were transferred to the Qezel-Qal'eh prison.

Shari'ati was accused of agitation against national security¹ – a standard charge against those who opposed the shah's regime, irrespective of the kind or degree of their activity. SAVAK was especially interested in the activities of the National Front and the Iranian Students' Confederation in Europe. According to Shari'ati he was cross-examined on his political opinions and activities in Europe and particularly his relation with the National Front in Paris. SAVAK was also curious about his

earlier short trip to Iran in 1962 and questioned him on his motives.²

During the first two weeks of interrogations at Qezel-Qal'eh he was not allowed any visitors and his family was not informed of his whereabouts. In a style that became a hallmark of his written responses to SAVAK's interrogators, Shari'ati engaged in long-winded, convoluted discourses to confuse and entangle his captors. Instead of providing specific hard facts useful to them, he embarked on analytical socio-political discussions. He criticized the National Front for its inability to grasp the peculiarities of the Iranian society, referring to the Land Reform law of 1962 and the reaction of the National Front to it. Forgetting his own writings in *Iran-e Azad*, he told his jailkeepers that 'the National Front should have maintained its critical posture while supporting the government's initiative of deep-rooted reforms. It should have defended the government against the opponents of reform while opposing any faltering on its part.'³ Continuing with his two edged analysis, yet in a conciliatory tone, he acknowledged the changes in Iran during his years of absence and criticized the incompetence of the Iranian government's representatives abroad for squandering public funds on useless propaganda material and their failure to inform Iranian students of the country's 'radical social changes'⁴ – an expression he used rather than the official 'Shah and Peoples' White Revolution'.

In prison, Shari'ati met the remnants of those who had been arrested for their participation in the 15 Khordad (5 June 1963) uprising. This encounter left a deep impression on him. In Paris he had praised the uprising as an 'illuminating thunderbolt' and a 'brilliant chapter in the history of our people'. He had also praised the 'courage and sacrifice of the freedom-loving men' who had participated.⁵ He was therefore shocked and perplexed by the attitude and behaviour of the prisoners, who in his mind he had elevated to lofty heights. As he later told his friends, at night these courageous men turned off the lights and, sobbing and wailing, prayed to God to relieve their pains.⁶

On 18 July 1964, six weeks after his arrest, Shari'ati was released from prison. When his train arrived at Mashhad railway station he was given a hearty welcome by friends and relatives and driven to his father's house where his family had taken up residence in a two-room annex of the main building.⁷ Friends and relatives flocked to welcome them. The excitement and joy of the return from Paris and Ali's release from prison allowed a temporary mood of exaltation to prevail. But, according to Ali's reminiscences, despite the apparent euphoria, his relationship with his father was at the time somewhat inhibited and uneasy. Shari'ati recalls that on the night of his arrival in Mashhad the two men did not have much to say because they 'felt ashamed' of one another, each for different reasons.⁸ Presumably Mohammad-Taqi felt ashamed for having asked his son to recant his political past while Ali felt remorse for not having complied by his father's wish.⁹

In Mashhad, Shari'ati initially frequented groups of old acquaintances and friends whom he knew from his school and university years, the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths or the literary circles he attended. Most of those

with whom he socialized were either ex-political activists or politicized literary figures. The activities of the Centre were, by this time, limited to small discussion groups held at the residence of various participants. Its old members had become professionals and heads of families with less time available for old-time discussions. Even though Shari'ati attended the gatherings of his old friends he did not enjoy himself very much as his interests had considerably diverged from theirs. Embarking upon intellectual projects such as translations or the writing of prose were his only source of joy and excitement. Soon after his arrival at Mashhad, Shari'ati met Shafi'i Kadkani, an old friend from the Peikar literary circle. By this time Shafi'i had abandoned his clerical education and was enrolled at Mashhad University's Faculty of Literature. The two men soon discovered that they still shared an old interest, namely literature, and decided to cooperate in the translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, which they both found interesting and useful. Shari'ati was supposed to translate the work from French and Shafi'i from English.¹⁰ Even though some preliminary work was done, the project never materialized.

On the job front, Shari'ati probably believed that his chances of an appointment in higher education would be promising. He had obtained his doctorate in Paris to serve as a 'passport' to a University position.¹¹ After his release from prison, he applied to Tehran University.¹² Later, having heard of vacancies in the departments of history and sociology at the University of Mashhad, he also applied for a teaching position there. His letters of application to both universities, however, drew no response. Convinced that he would not get a job without the right contacts among the university's teaching establishment, Shari'ati seems to have accepted that his quest was hopeless,¹³ for during this period he did not socialize with members of Mashhad's academic crowd.¹⁴ At first he was only successful in finding his way back to the Ministry of Education, where he was already employed as a teacher before he had left for Paris.

For the academic year of 1964–65, starting in September 1964, Shari'ati taught at three different high schools situated at three very different locations. He taught Persian language and literature at the Toroq Agricultural College, located five kilometers outside the city. The absence of public transport between the city and Toroq made his life rather difficult. (The eight bus lines that came to operate in the city were only inaugurated in 1965 and did not in any case link Toroq to the city centre). This is probably why a few months after his return to Mashhad Shari'ati bought a second-hand Volkswagen Beetle with his father's money – an act that in jest he referred to as 'his first revolutionary deed'. Shari'ati's second assignment was to teach composition and spelling at a high school for boys located at Darvazeh Gouchan or the old city gates towards Gouchan, at the northern extremity of Ark or Pahlavi street. Finally, he was assigned to teach literature at Irandokht High School for girls located in the middle of the town.

Shari'ati's depressed and dispirited psychological state during the first year of his return to Mashhad can be attributed to several factors. First, he had believed that his education and final degree from the Sorbonne would provide him with an

automatic ticket to Iran's university system. Other than the status and acknowledgement that a university post provided him, he needed a public that, if not intellectually and politically aware, at least had the motivation and willingness to acquire these characteristics. It was for this type of public that Shari'ati had prepared himself and with whom he hoped to have a meaningful dialogue. He was not a teacher in the classical sense of the word. The observation of punctual classroom hours and the application of rigid discipline were against his nature. He had neither the self-discipline to write a detailed syllabus, let alone follow or finish it, nor the patience to correct exam papers. What he liked about teaching was the excitement of lecturing and communicating what he believed was eye-opening. As a poetic political orator he could improvise for just about anything he had to teach. In the name of geography, history, literature or sociology he lectured on what he thought was important only if he felt his audience would appreciate it. High school teaching in Mashhad naturally dispirited him.

Shari'ati missed the bustling political environment of Paris with its freedom to think and speak and the fiery debates which it produced. After a passionate period of longing for Iran and its people, he realized that it was not only the political, social and cultural scene in Mashhad that depressed him, but that he felt like a stranger among his own people. He did not share their concern for family, promotion, material rewards and sensual pleasures, while he believed that they did not share his concern for democracy, freedom and independence.¹⁵

Even on political issues, Shari'ati's opinions on what seemed to be obvious matters differed from his radical intellectual friends. On 11 April 1965, the news of an attempt on the shah's life by Reza Shamsabadi, a guard at Marmar Palace, became public. Shamsabadi opened fire on the shah and killed two sergeants before he was gunned down; the shah escaped unscathed. In radical intellectual circles, the incident was widely discussed and the general feeling was one of grief and remorse over its failure. The next day, everyone was debating the event at Hajji Ali Akbar Shari'at-Razavi's (Shari'ati's father-in-law) house. To the surprise of Ali's friends, who had asked his opinion on the incident, Shari'ati argued that the country was most fortunate that the attempt had failed. He argued that the shah's assassination was an accomplishable task; the challenging work was that of preparing the subjective conditions for social change. He said: 'Our society is neither intellectually nor conceptually prepared for what should come after the shah. Rushing events could be disastrous.'¹⁶ Shari'ati's non-adventurist position went against the prevailing political mood among his friends, yet he seemed oblivious to the negative opinions of others about himself.

The gradual realization that his vision of Iran while in Paris was more of a mirage than a reality dejected and pushed him towards isolation and melancholy. His state of restlessness and utter dissatisfaction with his job and his general situation and environment during this period was reflected in his oft-repeated question to himself; 'what are you doing here?'¹⁷ Yet Shari'ati's sense of disillusion provides only a partial explanation of his melancholic mood and his increasing desire for

solitude, the determining factor has to be sought elsewhere. Shari'ati's return from Paris coincided with his preoccupation with gnosticism (*erfan*) and theosophism (*hekmat*), not as a subject of study but as a philosophy of life. His 'conversion' to gnosticism and its subsequent stages of personal transformation marked and shaped not only his future discourse and general comportment, but also provided him with an answer to the purpose of life. His excessive aloofness and unapproachability, correctly observed by his closest friends, were the outward signs of a novice embarking on his spiritual journey.

Salman-e Pak

In Paris, Shari'ati read many of Massignon's works. In two of his books, *The Passion of Hallaj*, *The Mystical Martyr of Islam* and *Salman Pak and the Spiritual Beginnings of Iranian Islam*, Shari'ati retrieved a constellation of symbols, themes and ideas, which served him in developing his ideological discourse. He identified with Massignon's heroes and felt great sympathy for their quest. The mystical bedrock of the activities of both Hallaj and Salman were familiar and dear to him. Involvement with the two men through the works of Massignon allowed him to reconstruct his ideas through their perception. He had become so overwhelmed by Massignon's spirit, ideas and comportment that he toyed with the idea of translating his works from French to Persian. Upon his return to Mashhad Shari'ati immersed himself in translating Massignon's article on Salman. Given his mood and state of mind at the time, this was probably the only kind of intellectual activity that attracted and satisfied him.

Even though Shari'ati maintained that he had translated Massignon's work on Hallaj,¹⁸ he never published it nor is there any evidence that he worked on it in Mashhad. The question, however, remains as to why in 1964, Shari'ati chose to translate and publish Massignon's research on Salman and not Hallaj? If he wished to ascertain and proclaim his faith in gnosticism was not Hallaj a better medium and a more renowned symbol? Was not Hallaj who had been martyred for the libertarian expression of his thoughts and experiences, a more significant religio-political symbol? Was it not Hallaj who personified the hardships of those who sought the Truth and the battle which they were thus obliged to wage against religious, political and economic powers? Was it not Hallaj who had attracted Massignon to Islamic mysticism? Was it not a vision of Hallaj, which had appeared to Massignon as a 'Seyyed in a green turban'¹⁹ delivering him from his agnosticism and reviving his faith in 1908? And finally was it not Hallaj who was the real spiritual link between Massignon and Shari'ati?

Shari'ati's *premier pas* with an article on Hallaj would have been too controversial. Hallaj, known for his sensational statement 'I am the Truth' was the *bête noire* of Sufism, and Sufism itself was always considered as highly suspect and irregular by mainstream Islam. An article on Hallaj's type of gnosticism would have renewed

the old feud between the orthodox believers of the *shari'a* and the heterodox supporters of the *tariqa* or the mystical path. Massignon's article on Hallaj could have further fanned resentment among the Iranian Shi'i establishment because of certain assertions made in it, which could have been construed as pro-Sunni if not anti-Shi'i. Massignon maintained that Hallaj was in favour of a 'moral reform of the Muslim community'.²⁰ In the factional power struggle that constitutes the background to Hallaj's trials and his final crucifixion, Massignon demonstrates how Hallaj was supported by the 'reformist Sunni conspirators' and opposed by 'Shi'i tax collectors' (*fermier généraux*) and their 'accomplices, the Jewish financiers in the Court'.²¹

The choice of the article on Salman is, however, significant. First, it seems as if Shari'ati intended to make a statement about his 'conversion' to gnosticism. Second, Shari'ati was committed to the revival of Salman and the introduction of his 'thoughts' and 'life'.²² The partially real and partially mythical personality and life of Salman Farsi, or Salman the Persian, represented the perfect role model of an Iranian Muslim who had risen to the rank of one of the principle companions of the Prophet, if not 'the first of the Three Apostles (*hawariyun*; with Miqdad and Abu Zarr)'.²³ According to Shari'ati, Salman was 'the first Shi'i and the first propagator of Shi'ism in Iran'.²⁴ Third, Salman embodied the unification of three different religions and their final transcendence through gnosticism. He was a Mazdean who had converted to Christianity and having heard of the coming of the Messenger of God, suffered great hardship to join Mohammad and had finally become a Muslim. He was the proof that religions were temporal emanations of a single divine source and seekers of the Truth were obliged to surpass the veils and establish unmediated contact if they were to attain enlightenment. Fourth, Shari'ati intended to repay his spiritual debt to Massignon by introducing and promoting his spiritual guide, who was unknown to the Persian public.²⁵ The fifth, and probably least important reason was that of presenting to Iranian intellectuals what Shari'ati considered to be a scholarly masterpiece. Shari'ati praised the 'absolute objectivity and impartiality', 'precision', 'erudition' and 'research techniques' of Massignon's article on Salman.²⁶ Whereas for Shari'ati, Abu Zarr was the embodiment and symbol of Islamic egalitarianism, Salman represented an Iranianized gnostic Islam.

Salman-e Pak, published in Mashhad was made up of two parts: the translation of Massignon's article on Salman and an introduction to it by Shari'ati. In his introduction, Shari'ati voiced certain opinions which were novel, controversial, and with hindsight revealing in terms of his approach to the construction of social, economic and political themes from the 'language' of Islam. The analysis of the 'language' of Islam, had convinced Shari'ati that beneath the uni-dimensional surface and appearance of Islamic concepts existed a wealth of esoteric allegories and explanations. This new angle was probably a relic of Shari'ati's encounter with Massignon – who, as he himself proclaimed, had taught him the art of 'seeing'.²⁷

The gnostic approach in Islam, Shari'ati argued, was an attempt at penetrating

the outwardly manifest in order to obtain the inwardly hidden. Only through such an exercise was it possible to transcend the concepts and become exposed to new horizons.²⁸ The legitimate sources on the basis of which such an exercise should be conducted were only the Qur'an and the history of Islam.²⁹ Shari'ati was questioning the clergy's traditional method of inquiry and analysis which was essentially based on *hadith* and *ravayat* or Shi'i reports of the sayings or acts of the Prophet and the Shi'i imams. Shari'ati was presenting Massignon's research on Salman as a prototype of how research on Islamic issues should be conducted.³⁰

Shari'ati asserted that the language of all religions, especially Islam, was symbolic. It was not even supposed to be understood by all at a given time. He argued that the allegorical verses in the Qur'an (*mutashabihat*) that had caused so many headaches and disagreements were 'intentionally' inserted and shrouded in a metaphysical language.³¹ These allegories possessed different aspects and dimensions and were therefore naturally subject to a multitude of interpretations. In time, as individuals approached the stage of perfection, they would gradually come to comprehend these verses.³² Shari'ati concluded that it was the Prophet and his Book that had intentionally sown the seeds of divergence and disagreement among the different schools of Islam.³³ Fully aware of the unorthodoxy of his contention, he plunged into an even more unorthodox justification of his finding. As if wanting to prepare his public for his future writings, he argued that unity and similarity of ideas, perceptions and orientations led to inertia and stagnation which in turn could prove fatal for society.³⁴ Shari'ati praised the dialectical tool of analysis which in his opinion scientifically demonstrated that society would perish as soon as contentions and contradictions were absent from the social arena. Having praised a tool, the association of which with the Marxian school of thought was evident to him, Shari'ati immediately referred to two Qur'anic verses arguing that God had willed differences of opinion to exist among people.³⁵ The intellectual and scientific progress of the Islamic world during its first three to four centuries, he argued, was due to the free clash of ideas and beliefs whereas the degeneration and corruption that followed resulted from the hegemony of one 'idea', one 'religion', one political orientation and the faltering of debates and quarrels over competing ideas.³⁶

Presenting the plurality of opinions and the right to dissent as an Islamic principle, Shari'ati argued against the institutionalization of Islam and the consequent centralization of command which 'enchained ideas'.³⁷ By claiming that in Islam the concept of a clerical organization (*rowhaniyat*) of the kind that exists in the Christian church was non-existent, he questioned the *raison d'être* of the clergy. In his introduction to Salman, Shari'ati addressed and challenged both the political and religious establishment in Iran. His condemnation of despotism in all forms, his open call for the freedom of expression and an arena for the clash of such ideas and finally his warnings of the impending disaster that threatened despotic and subsequently inert societies was indicative of the fact that Shari'ati was intent on engaging all parties that he held responsible for Iran's problems in an open debate.

Under the spell of the Parisian political environment of free clash of ideas, Shari'ati was intent on using the same tactics in Iran. The introduction to *Salman* was the first volley from Mashhad.

Shari'ati's translation of '*Salman*' was based on Massignon's French text and also an Arabic translation of this text by Abdulrahman Badawi.³⁸ Shari'ati recalled that 'in the memory of Massignon and for his love, I stayed up every night until dawn, for a year, translating the article with great enthusiasm, satisfaction, hope and precision.'³⁹ Even though the introduction of '*Salman*' was finished by December of 1964, the book was not published until 1966.⁴⁰ Shari'ati financed its publication himself. Then came the period of disillusionment and frustration. Not only was the book for which Shari'ati had great hopes neglected and unwelcomed by the public, but it was also disapproved and ostracised by the religious community. The contents of Massignon's article were branded as 'erroneous' and 'deviationist' and Shari'ati's discourse on the origin of disagreement and dissent in Islam as 'infidelity'.⁴¹ Shari'ati recalled that on the orders of an influential and pious publisher who specialized in Islamic books and who had sought the professional opinion of an Islamic jurist, Shari'ati's book on *Salman* was banned in Tehran as 'religiously and scientifically problematical and dubious'.⁴² It is said that in Shiraz and Tabriz the faithful had been so offended by Shari'ati's ideas that they had purchased the book and destroyed it.⁴³ The intellectuals' reaction to '*Salman*' was no more enthusiastic. Amir Parviz Puyan, an old acquaintance of Shari'ati who had been a regular attendant of the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths but had later become a Marxist, sent a sarcastic message to Shari'ati saying: 'instead of translating (Marx's) *Capital*, is this (Salman) the present you have brought us from Europe?'⁴⁴ Shari'ati is reported to have retorted that; 'from now on I will work on texts which pilgrims use when they visit holy shrines (*ziaratnameh*)'.⁴⁵

Shari'ati's first attempt, after his return to Iran, at initiating some sort of an intellectual dialogue with the Iranian intelligentsia and especially the Islamic modernists among them proved catastrophic. This experience left him bitter, humiliated and even vengeful. He consoled himself by saying, 'to hell with it if the people do not understand and that the intellectuals are even more ignorant'.⁴⁶ For the clerical establishment and its obedient followers who refused to entertain any new ideas Shari'ati bore nothing but resentment. From this experience he learnt that he could not depend on the clergy or the predominantly Westernized intellectuals in order to propagate his new ideas. The public response to *Salman* convinced Shari'ati that the hegemony of one 'idea', one 'religion' and one political orientation could not be easily and rapidly undone by a distant cry from Mashhad. Shari'ati's first intellectual deadlock and the general atmosphere of frustration and disillusionment that had marked every step of his life after his return inclined him more towards introverted self-searching.

After a year in Mashhad, and before the final publication of his book on *Salman*, Shari'ati requested a transfer to the Ministry of Education's Department of Research

and Planning in Tehran. Apparently Shari'ati's friends used their influence to obtain approval for the application. They probably felt that a research position would release him from his unwanted high school teaching and allow him to pursue his intellectual interests in peace. The change from Mashhad's stifling cultural atmosphere to Tehran would also, they believed, lift his spirits. Shari'ati left his family in Mashhad and started his new job in the autumn of 1965. Working regular hours as a functionary did not, however, exactly suit his disposition and taste.

Reza Davari, who occupied the room in front of Shari'ati's office at the Department of Research and Planning remembers that he was always quiet and reserved.⁴⁷ He came to his office, which he shared with someone else, early in the morning and worked until late in the afternoon. He hardly ever left his room or talked to his roommate, let alone his other colleagues at the Department. He attended regular official meetings, yet never spoke a word. Instead he played with his ball-pen and sometimes drew lines on the pad of paper before him. He left the meetings in the same aloof and introverted manner he entered them, never uttering a word. Those who did not know him thought him as a sombre and dreary character. He stayed at the Department of Research and Planning until March 1966 and referred to this short episode in his life as a 'sad and ludicrous experience'.⁴⁸

A Guide to Khorasan

During his stay at the Ministry of Education Shari'ati was set to work on a tourist guide-book for Khorasan. The book first appeared in 1966, the same year as *Salman*, under the title of *Rahnama-ye Khorasan* (A Guide to Khorasan). It was published by the Iranian Tourist Office. This book is of particular interest since it is Shari'ati's only government-commissioned work. Apart from the chapters devoted to a detailed description of Khorasan's towns, their natural and historical setting, and their historical monuments and relics; the suburbs and summer residents around Mashhad; the city of Mashhad, the private and public services in it and its centres of attraction, the book includes a whole chapter on the history, political and economic geography, religion and culture of Khorasan.

Shari'ati emphasized and traced the historical significance of Khorasan in the history of the Aryan people inhabiting the Iranian plateau. He considered 'greater Khorasan' (Khorasan-e Bozorg) to be the cradle of Iran's political state and the guarantor of Iran's independence in the face of all foreign invasions. Page after page, he explained how Khorasan produced leaders and revolutionary movements that revolted against foreign aggressors, whether Greeks, Muslims or Mongols, ousted them from power and safeguarded Iran's sovereignty and self-determination. Liberation movements, he argued, recurrently originated in Khorasan.⁴⁹ The account of Khorasan's liberation movements and its revolutionary leaders comes to an end with a tribute to Colonel Mohammad Taqi Khan Pesyan the 'young, intellectual and progressive commander of the Khorasan army'.⁵⁰ The mention of

the colonel's name in an official tourist guide of the Pahlavi regime is somewhat unusual, for in 1921, Pesyan had revolted against the central government of Ahmad Shah. Even more interesting, Ahmad Shah's minister of war at the time was no less than Reza Khan who had dispatched a Cossack force of 5000 men against Pesyan.

Under the sub-heading of religion in Khorasan, Shari'ati took pride in introducing Mazdak as 'the Iranian revolutionary born in Neishabur'.⁵¹ In stark contrast to official history as it was taught in Iranian textbooks, where tribute was paid to Anushiravan-e Adel for having put down the 'Mazdaki ruse', Shari'ati praised Mazdak and then went on to pay tribute to Abu Muslem Khorasani who overthrew the Ummayyads and replaced them with the Abbasids, and to the Sarbedariyeh movement which overthrew the Mongols and created an independent state in Khorasan. Clearly Shari'ati's account of religion in Khorasan was focused on politicized religion in the service of political objectives and ideals. Later in his life and writings, Shari'ati elaborated in detail his position on the historic and political role of individuals such as Mazdak and movements such as the Sarbedariyeh.

Shari'ati's socio-political inclinations crept into this text to make a rather unusual tourist guide. He wrote; 'Mashhad's pilgrims are usually from the Iranian masses. Their perception and artistic taste has not become Westoxicated. The blending of a religious and national (folkloric) perception determines the artistic and aesthetic values of the pilgrims.'⁵² Elsewhere, in a detailed history of seminary schools in Mashhad, he referred to a legend about the founder of the Sa'ededdin School, who financed its construction by discovering a treasure. Shari'ati pointed out that the legend was most probably false, yet it demonstrated how those who had unlawfully amassed great fortunes by expropriation and theft wished to legitimize their wealth in the eyes of the people by fabricating legends and undertaking charitable acts. He argued that wealthy do-gooders tried to remove the lingering suspicion of the origin of their wealth (*az koja avardeh'i?*) among the people by 'purifying' their money through acts of benevolence. This approach, Shari'ati argued, was often employed by the Safavid kings.⁵³ As interesting as the subject may be, one does not expect to come across a debate on the ownership rights of kings or founders of historical monuments in a tourist guide!

In a rather bold and unexpected passage, Shari'ati referred to the peoples' discontent at the forced policy of unveiling women and the events that ensued. Reflecting on the Gowharshad incident under the sub-heading of 'Astaneh (Imam Reza's Shrine) under the blows of History', he wrote; 'in order to break the people's resistance against the unveiling edict, government troops fired on the people and the Gowharshad mosque in which they had taken refuge and subsequently Valiollah [Mohammad Vali] Asadi, the vice-trustee of the Astaneh, was tried and executed before a firing squad.'⁵⁴ The execution of Asadi, a very influential and well-known figure in Khorasan, was directly ordered by Reza Shah since it was reported that he had taken sides with the opponents of the unveiling edict. Without mentioning his name, Shari'ati vividly evokes Reza Shah's role and responsibility in the bloodletting.

Shari'ati's tourist-guide did not include the usual praise reserved for Reza Shah and Mohammad-Reza Shah in official state publications. There are only two direct references to Reza Shah. First, it is observed that during his reign, Mashhad received far greater state attention, the effect of which was reflected in the physical appearance of the city.⁵⁵ Second, that Reza Shah personally attended the International Congress that was organized in Tus to commemorate Ferdowsi, the great Iranian epic poet.⁵⁶ In neither case is Reza Shah revered. More striking is the fact that in a governmental publication no references can be found to Mohammad-Reza Shah, the reigning monarch.

Applying to Mashhad University

Working at the Ministry of Education was obviously not the most suitable job for Shari'ati. During his stay in Tehran, Shari'ati had the opportunity to seriously pursue his application for a university position. Jalal Matini, a member of the Faculty of Literature at Mashhad University and later its dean, maintains that after Shari'ati's return to Mashhad from Paris both he and his wife (Puran) applied for a teaching position in history and literature respectively.⁵⁷ However, the internal by-laws of the Faculty of Literature stipulated that candidates with a Doctorat d'Université from a French university applying for a teaching position were obliged to fulfill three requirements. First, their degree had to be in the same field as their bachelors degree. Second, candidates for the teaching of English and French language must have received their doctorate from countries in which English or French were the official national language. Third, candidates for assistant or associate professorship in Persian language and literature must have obtained their doctorate from Tehran University.⁵⁸ Once these requirements were fulfilled, the department sent the candidates' request to Tehran University, where they were subjected to an oral and written exam in addition to a trial lecture.⁵⁹ According to Matini, however, the Faculty of Literature did not have an official or legal faculty council.⁶⁰ Without an officially constituted council, decisions by members could not be considered as legal or binding. Furthermore, the triple conditions set by Mashhad's Faculty of Literature were not a national policy promulgated by the Ministry of Education and were not necessarily applied by other Iranian Universities.⁶¹ Rather than official rules and regulations, the triple conditions for candidacy must have been a set of loose guidelines based on the tacit agreement of an unofficial group of professors. Matini recalls that on the basis of these by-laws, he recommended to Ahmad-Ali Raja'i (Bokhara'i), the dean, that the requests of both Ali and Puran Shari'ati be refused since Ali's qualifications violated the first item (his BA was in literature) and Puran's the third (her doctorate in Persian literature was obtained from France). In passing, since Matini refers to Shari'ati's violation of the first item, it must be assumed that Shari'ati had convinced the Ministry of Education that his doctoral degree was in History.

Impervious to Matini's recommendation, Raja'i forwarded the credentials of both candidates to the departments of literature and history for consideration. According to Matini, at the departmental meeting of Languages and Persian Literature, at which he was present, Puran Shari'ati's application was rejected on the basis of the Faculty's so-called by-law. The Department of History, however, decided that Ali Shari'ati's credentials were sufficient and in compliance with standard procedures informed the university of its approval.⁶² Subsequently, Shari'ati's file was sent to the History Department of Tehran University for further consideration and a final decision. More than a year and a half after Shari'ati's application to Mashhad, the History department of Tehran University approved his candidacy for the position of assistant professor of history and informed the Ministry of Education of its decision.⁶³

Why the process took so long is not clear. Shari'ati first saw the advertisement for the position when he was in Tehran in the Autumn of 1965. To prepare his application form, he asked his wife, who was in Mashhad, to send him his doctorate degree and its evaluation by the Iranian embassy in France.⁶⁴ Mirzazadeh recalls that he and Puran searched the whole house looking for the degrees and finally found them tucked in the chimney of a kerosene heater, where Ali had hidden and then forgotten them.⁶⁵ Shari'ati applied for the position from Tehran in November 1965. He received confirmation of the receipt of his application and was informed that the Department of History would act on his request according to the normal procedures.⁶⁶ Less than a month later, he received a letter from the Ministry of Education instructing him to go to the University of Tehran, as soon as possible, where he would be notified of the date of his exams.⁶⁷

Shari'ati recalls that, after he submitted his application file, he was invited for an interview with Dr Bina of the History Department at Tehran University. The interview turned out to be a fiasco. Apparently, having asked Shari'ati if he had obtained his doctorate from France, and having received an affirmative answer, Dr Bina belittled Shari'ati's doctorate.⁶⁸ Shari'ati had in return challenged Dr Bina's knowledge and scholarship. The squabble that ensued between the two men had led to a physical tug-of-war in the corridors of the University. Shari'ati remembers that the students flocked out of their classes and cheered him.

After this embarrassing incident Shari'ati had no reason to believe that Tehran University would be interested in the 'insolent' character from Mashhad. After a few days, however, to his utter surprise, he received a telegram summoning him for a second interview in Tehran and an exam.⁶⁹ Shari'ati provides an intriguing explanation of how past rivalries and jealousies between Drs Bina and Bayani (also a member of Tehran's history faculty) were instrumental in his appointment.⁷⁰ In Tehran, he took the exam and was unexpectedly and rather rapidly employed as an assistant professor of history.⁷¹

Shari'ati's own explanation of his employment at the University of Mashhad is rather fantastical. On the other hand, Matini's account of the process insinuates that it was suspect and his acceptance was effectively the work of powerful

mysterious hands.⁷² The real story, however, was simple and very much in the traditional Iranian way of doing things. Zaryab-e Kho'i, a prominent Iranian historian at the University of Tehran, recalled that the Department of History received a letter from Professor Safa, head of Tehran University's Faculty of Literature asking that department to examine one Ali Shari'ati, who had applied for the position of Assistant Professor of History.⁷³ Two historians, Zaryab-e Kho'i and Bayani, were appointed by the department as his examiners. Before the examination date, Zaryab-e Kho'i recalls that Kazem Motahedin, who worked at the Senate and was a mutual friend, called on him. Motahedin put in a good word for Shari'ati and strongly recommended the young man. A few other common friends, among them Professor Falaturi, called asking Zaryab-e Kho'i to be lenient towards Shari'ati, for whom they all had great respect. On the examination day, Shari'ati was asked to write on the Iranian Constitutional Movement. He was also given a written exam to test his mastery of French. According to Zaryab-e Kho'i, who graded Shari'ati's exams, he demonstrated a good working knowledge of French but his knowledge of modern Iranian history was wanting. Shari'ati's history essay lacked scientific coherence and was generally inspired by sociological Fanonist ideas. Zaryab-e Kho'i, however, judged that Shari'ati could teach history and approved his candidacy. In late February, the Department of History informed the Faculty of Literature at Mashhad of its positive decision. In a letter dated 20 March 1966, the Ministry of Education informed Shari'ati that 'having passed the exam for the position of assistant professor of history' he was appointed to this position at the University of Mashhad and would receive his previous teacher's salary of 1320 toman per month until his position could be budgeted in the University's annual expenditures.⁷⁴

Shari'ati eventually found his way into Iran's university system in a manner not very different from anyone else! As a man brought up in the traditional custom of proudly acknowledging his debt to those who had helped him, exalted about the news of his acceptance, Shari'ati wrote to his father that, 'thanks to the activities of Kazem Agha [Motahedin] and the recommendations of Dr Falaturi, we have been freed from one of our greatest anxieties.'⁷⁵

Mystical Murmurs

'We Sufis are all relatives and the pupils of the same doctrine'

If we accept Shari'ati's assertion that in 1964 the sparks of gnosticism, which he had experienced since childhood, finally became a thunderbolt transforming his life and luring him to Sufism, his mysterious writings of the period could be considered as proof of his gnostic quest. By explaining the process of soul-searching and attainment of the 'Truth', Shari'ati describes his quest for perfection: the objective of all Sufis. The allegorical language he uses can, however, be obscure. Shari'ati employed the art of veiling concepts, experiences, events and individuals in a language that possessed an apparent and superficial meaning while enveloping a series of riddles and puzzles. His writings of this type were formulations with two different, if not opposite messages. Shari'ati sought to force those wishing to go beyond the evident and the outwardly manifest meaning of his mystical writings to labour through a mental labyrinth, meticulously unveiling for themselves the truth of his words, just as he had painstakingly set out on his own journey in search of the 'Truth'. Shari'ati's mystical works and accounts of his earlier supernatural experiences were written between 1964 and 1968 and are spread out in his 'Dialogues of Solitude' (*Gofteguha-ye Tanha'i*) and 'Descent in the Desert' (*Hobut dar Kavir*).¹

Distinguishing his mystical writings or '*kaviriyat*' as his favourite, Shari'ati intentionally categorized them as a distinct genre. The term *kaviriyat* or desert-like refers to his book *Kavir* which contains a considerable part of his mystical writings. Shari'ati described *Kavir* as an exceptionally private piece of writing about which he was not willing to talk publicly.² In *Kavir*, which Shari'ati calls his 'story', he boldly destroys all the usual defences which ordinary people construct in order to protect themselves from prying eyes. In both 'Descent in the Desert' and 'Dialogues of Solitude', Shari'ati not only casts aside his psychological shields and inhibitions but stands naked under the floodlights he turns upon himself. These works are unprecedented accounts of self-divulgence and self-negation that are uncommon among socially conscious contemporary Iranian intellectuals.

Kavir, according to Shari'ati, is the mysterious and sad story of 'being'.³ It is an account of Man's separation from God and his descent to earth where he realizes

his forlorn and sad state of 'being' and finally his escape from the prison of his 'being' by reuniting with God. Shari'ati confided in an interviewer that he wrote *Kavir* because he had 'heard the footsteps of a passerby'. The 'passerby', Shari'ati explained, was 'He (*ou*) whom everyone in the lurking-place of their nature longs for throughout life'.⁴ Shari'ati referred to the 'Desert' as a place in which; 'God is present'⁵ and 'one is able to find God easier'.⁶ In Shari'ati's desert, the only plants that grow beautifully are visions and illusions.⁷ He describes the desert as the brink of our worldly existence and the edge of the supernatural world, where one could feel and see the presence of God.⁸ This is why all Prophets received their message in the desert.⁹ 'Kavir is a mysterious nowhere land in which this world and the Hereafter stand face to face'.¹⁰

In the virgin solitude of the desert where no man-made artifacts could blemish the perfection of creation, Shari'ati observed and appreciated the Creator's masterpiece. In his communion with nature, he came to rediscover his senses. With a different set of perceptory organs he came in possession of a new vision, seeing what had been invisible before. He picked up sounds and messages which he previously could not. Shari'ati became so totally absorbed in the purity, grandeur and beauty of God that he fell in love. The desert is the untarnished primal element. In it there are no veils and masks behind which to hide. In it one stands naked and bare; stripped of the worldly ornaments and shields of fame, fortune, status, reputation and lineage. The desert makes a mockery of Man's material achievements. Deprived of the magical security of his civilization, denuded of his contrived technical products Man is left alone with his spirituality. Even the mind is robbed of its relieving power of delusion. Mirage is a gift to the novice, refused to him by the time he becomes a veteran of the desert. In this vast transparent void, feelings and thoughts can not be feigned or faked before the Omniscient. In the desert, the insincere has no place to escape from his shame. It is in the desert that Shari'ati chooses to stand alone before his creator, proclaim his adoration and set out to win the love of his Beloved.

Shari'ati's choice of the desert as an ideal refuge from the banality of everyday life, where one could meditate in solitude, is well rooted in Sufi tradition. Alluding to his Sufism, Shari'ati drew a parallel between Mowlavi, the illustrious Iranian Sufi and himself. *Kavir* was, he said, his *Masnavi* and added that 'like a guiding Qur'an, it leads some and misleads others'.¹¹ The desert can also be construed as a symbol of Shari'ati's state of emptiness resulting from his unknowing before God. Its content could be interpreted as a mystical statement of bewilderment and perplexity (*heirat*) following his quest for a truth unfathomable by rational thought. We can quite safely speculate that what Shari'ati referred to as his *kaviriyat* was nothing other than what classical Sufis called *shathiyat* (plural for *shath*) or the ecstatic words of a Sufi. *Kaviriyat* was a mask behind which Shari'ati concealed his secret words of ecstasy, from not only the uninitiated but also from those who might have threatened his liberties if not his life. Shari'ati recalled how he kept his involvement with gnosticism a secret hidden from the 'religious institution' and

his 'father', so that the hidebound religious public would not know that he had sacrificed his hereditary religion for Sufism.¹²

Ecstatic words are usually uttered by the speaker when he is burning with the desire to meet the Almighty. The concept of ecstatic words (*shath*) could signify 'the pinnacle of mystical experience, where the speaker becomes united to the divine word.'¹³ Words that are expressed describing one's condition and most intimate experiences in a state of exaltation, rapture and ecstasy are also ecstatic words (*shath*).¹⁴ The meaning of ecstatic words is shrouded in mystery and as Corbin emphasizes contains an 'element of ambiguity and double meaning'.¹⁵ The utterance of ecstatic words, however, results from some level of real or imagined communication and conversation with God. In some cases it is even understood as the real or conceived repetition of His words by a human being. The person involved in such mystical experiences usually finds himself in a state of delirium accompanied by a high fever and completely overcome by anxiety. The intense state of excitement which prevails drowns the speaker's reasoning and inhibitions thereby unleashing what seems like incoherent and irrational statements. Words of ecstasy, therefore, appear as flagrant statements of infidelity (*kuf*r) while in reality they are meant as affirmations of faith (*iman*). Referring to his own ecstatic words, Shari'ati explained how 'many of his own words and signs were even incomprehensible to himself.'¹⁶ So it is not surprising that he felt ordinary people could not understand him when he spoke such words. He wrote, 'I am saying different kinds of things but no one understands.'¹⁷

Shari'ati's Retreat

After his return to Mashhad in 1964, Shari'ati's inability to communicate with old acquaintances and friends, frustrated and somewhat disgusted him. He felt alone among 'stranger-friends', whose needs and existence he judged as base and contemptible.¹⁸ He described them as hollow and flattering opportunists, whose prime concern in life was summed up in the quadruple of 'stomach, under stomach [sexual organs], clothing and their buttocks'.¹⁹ In a highly caustic tone Shari'ati explained his estrangement and forlornness. He lamented how after years of sharing the same 'path, work, religion, country, neighbourhood, blood and home'; he felt as if he were a complete stranger, 'as distant as one of the billion individuals who will be born in an unknown corner of Australia in future centuries from one of the billion individuals who was to be born before the dawn of history in an unknown South African tribe, but was aborted.'²⁰ The absence of a meaningful intellectual environment pained him. Exhausted and intellectually scandalized by intermingable discussion of the preoccupations of everyday life, he yearned for a milieu in which words would be used to outline the contours of grandiose ideals and express the excitement of real or conceived revelations. His abhorrence of the mediocrity of life and the passion with which people around him lived their trivial

and superficial existence gradually gnawed at the bases of all his optimism and faith in mankind.

Shari'ati's aversion to his social environment was one of the reasons for his introversion and his search for a truth beyond trivial worldly appearances. He explained that having searched among different religions he was becoming convinced that he could not have faith in any one of them until he suddenly discovered the way of the Sufis. 'Sufism (*tassavof*), was the only religion, doctrine and faith' which could tame his 'rebellious mind'.²¹ In 1969, he implied that his involvement with Sufism was concurrent with the shattering of his political aspirations.²² He wrote as if Shari'ati the gnostic was born only after the death of Shari'ati the political activist. He spoke of the renaissance of his 'Islam, resignation, faith, gnosticism, theosophy (*hekmat*) and inner knowledge (*ma'refat*)' on the heels of 'the defeat of heroism and the end of the battles and the acts of bravery'.²³

The anguish of 'philosophical agnosticism' as he called it, started to set in. The debate on the reason for existence and the meaning of death preoccupied him during his long spells of solitude. At this time Shari'ati became interested in the thought of Sadeq Hedayat, the famous Iranian writer who had also suffered from the shallowness and pettiness of the people around him and, unable to find anything meaningful in life, had committed suicide. Expressing his empathy for Hedayat's anguish in life and perhaps even his suicide, Shari'ati commiserated with him without naming him. He wrote, 'Woe! How I feel sorry for the lamentable life of my grieved compatriot, who is sleeping a few steps away from me in a forgotten corner of this mournful [cemetery of] Père Lachaise! How he suffered in life from those 'pains that like leprosy eat the soul from the inside and carve out its interiors.'²⁴ As if overcome and possessed not only by Hedayat's pain and grief but also his soul and therefore his style of writing, Shari'ati followed his reference with an utterly atypical passage which paradoxically bears an extremely close resemblance to Hedayat's coarse style. Lashing out at the petty people who suffocated him and Hedayat, Shari'ati described a 'nauseating' paradise and the grotesque sexual fantasies that these 'four legged' individuals hoped they could realize in it.²⁵ In a language typical of Hedayat, yet also recurrent in certain works of Mohammad Baqer Majlesi, Shari'ati described how for these 'four legged' individuals paradise signified a place in which 'each act of fornication would last seven hundred and seventy seven thousand years and seven months and seven days and seven hours and seven minutes and seven seconds.'²⁶ By vulgarizing and insulting what he considered to be the trivial people who outraged him and his 'grieved compatriot', he was taking vengeance not only for himself but also for Hedayat.

Having dispelled his own urge to commit suicide Shari'ati became preoccupied with what had prompted Hedayat to go through with it.²⁷ Citing Hedayat's writings as proof of his contention, Shari'ati argued that Hedayat was in search of a meaningful reason and purpose in life and tried to find it first in nationalism, then in humanism, subsequently in Indian philosophy and finally in Kafkaesque nihilism. When he discovered that none of his solutions could fill the philosophical

vacuum that haunted him he took away his own life.²⁸

Shari'ati argued that it was 'philosophical agnosticism', the 'agony of doubt' and 'the misery of incertitude or unknowing' that had led Hedayat to commit suicide.²⁹ Shari'ati, too, was plagued by all these afflictions. He believed that solitude was the most preeminent characteristic of the human condition. In pursuit of perfection, human beings had to become estranged from the collectivity and deeply involved with the 'self'. Reflecting on death, Shari'ati concluded that the fear of 'liberation' from the prison of everyday life, caused anxiety and became unbearable, forcing the individual to find refuge in an earthly love or an artistic creation, both of which helped generate temporal bonds and ties.³⁰ Shari'ati sought an alternative to his existential anxiety. 'Directed by gnosticism and the power of love,' the individual could 'glide on the wings of his restless soul' and 'escape to that familiar nowhere land which is not here.' Alternatively, the individual could 'save' himself by accepting the invitation of a prophetic leader with a message from 'there'. Shari'ati concluded that the individual who does not believe in the spiritual message or the calling of his heart and does not find comfort in love or the arts is left with 'what is'. He is then confronted with two possible alternatives: either 'wine' which would help him forget or 'suicide' which would free him for good.³¹ Realizing his own dilemma, Shari'ati heeded, 'one could choose to commit suicide, but one could not decide not to understand.'³²

The Need for God

For Shari'ati, the riddle of Hedayat's suicide was solved. As a disbeliever, Hedayat could only wash down the pains of the meaninglessness of temporal life with vodka and when that proved ineffective, incapable of deciding not to understand, he chose death. From Shari'ati's point of view had Hedayat been a believer things would have been different since he would then have turned to Sufism which would have taken him beyond the temporal 'what is'.³³ Faced with the same questions and maddening uncertainty which had shattered his faith for a time, Shari'ati discovered the confirmation of a premonition he had as a youth in 1958. At that time he had written; 'Oh mighty God whether you exist or not now I need you desperately, all I need is for You to exist!'.³⁴

Arguing that human beings needed to know what existed and occurred beyond what they saw with their eyes, Shari'ati posited that they sought to discover and understand the supernatural. Their awareness of their own solitude was an interminable reminder of the metaphysical. Shari'ati sought to free his soul and spirit, which belonged to the metaphysical world, from the prison of his earthly body and thereby escape the agony of 'what is' while gaining the eternal security and freedom provided by inner knowledge or *ma'rifat*. He thus heeded the call of his heart and found himself traversing the Sufi path. His revived interest in Sufism came at an opportune time. Having destroyed the ancestral God that he had in-

herited and incapable of finding his own God, for a time he became a disbeliever in God and the world of the supernatural.³⁵ Then he found the True God of this world. A God who despised the cowardly, the deceitful, the greedy and the flatterers. An Almighty who admired the chivalrous and those who befriended Him and were intimate with Him. Breaking with his past religion Shari'ati boldly observed that; 'God needed an amorous *aref* [knower] and not a customer of heaven.'³⁶

In his story of creation Shari'ati provides his readers with a clue to the power that moved him to return to God. He explains how Man's bliss and happiness in paradise was really a grinding and painful trial. He argues that a lonely beatitude is a painful joy. Loneliness is only a half existence. 'Being unaccompanied made heaven seem like a desert.'³⁷ Shari'ati explained that God created Eve, a partner for Adam to cure his pain of being alone. But Man's real anguish, according to Shari'ati, began with the simple understanding that the source of his pain was in 'separation' and not 'loneliness'. He affirmed that it was not being 'unaccompanied' that hurt him but the state of not being 'with he/He'.³⁸ In the tradition of all Sufis, He (*ou* or *huwah*, the third person) for Shari'ati was not a human being but God. Shari'ati claimed that having been with Him in heaven, Man's longing for reunion with God began immediately after Man was condemned to descend on earth. The moment man found himself on earth, he became acquainted with fear, anxiety, solitude and longing. Shari'ati wrote; 'But He (*ou*) was not there [on earth], a familiar face was absent, His absence made strangers out of all the present faces, His absence rendered all beings futile.'³⁹ Referring to himself, Shari'ati confided that from the moment he set foot on earth and lost Him, he had nothing to look forward to in the world around him. He had turned inwards and found the 'inner self' to be rich, as much as, the outer was impoverished.⁴⁰ Shari'ati's introspection allowed him to pose the appropriate question. He wrote, 'I search for my essence and cannot find it, I am His shadow, where is He ?'⁴¹ Thus began the process of transcendental transformation which Shari'ati called the 'magnificent holy dialectic' or the 'Sufi dialectic'⁴² at the end of which 'Man returned to God' and 'the Beloved (*ma'shuq*) embraced His lover (*asheq*) who had shed his own essence.'⁴³ The reunion, according to Shari'ati, would occur in heaven, from which Man had been evicted. Anticipating his return to the pre-creational stage, Shari'ati wrote, 'I shall return, I will retrieve the heaven that I left behind. There, I, Love and God will conspire to recreate the world anew and recommence creation anew. In this eternal past (*azal*) God will no longer be alone and in this world I will no longer be a stranger.'⁴⁴

Shari'ati's Gnosticism

Shari'ati's gnosticism was an aspect of his battle against traditional religion. Distinguishing between faith and religion, Shari'ati acknowledged that his faith was kneaded into the water and clay from which he was created.⁴⁵ Yet faith, he explained,

had an external (*zaheri*) and an internal (*bateni*) aspect. For him, the essence of faith was gnosticism (*erfan*) and the way to it was through the Path (*tariqa*). Contrasting official religion and its frame of reference, the canon (*shari'a*) with the kernel of faith, Shari'ati believed that concern with external appearances led to 'tradition-worshipping'. The common people, he argued, believed that the purpose of faith was realized through fasting, prayers, the payment of religious dues, the use of a rosary, the wearing of the beard, purification and ablution.⁴⁶ The 'tradition-worshippers' who, believe that outward piety and ritual will lead them to God in reality, substitute the shadow for the real light. Shari'ati wrote, 'I find *eshraq* (illumination) to be superior to *'aql* (reason), the heart to be more honourable than the brain and the interior more grandiose than the exterior. I detest 'reality' (*vaghe'iyat*) [appearances] and believe that the truth (*haqiqat*) is of a far higher order. I am a 'truth worshipper' (*mosol parast*).⁴⁷ Applying the dualism used by Manichaeans, Plato and traditional Sufis, Shari'ati contrasted his own love for the absolute which he labelled as 'truth-worshipping' with the standard practice of 'tradition-worshipping', both aspects of the same Absolute. Demonstrating the inevitable incompatibility, if not contradiction of the internal and external aspects of religion, Shari'ati focused on the struggle between them. He wrote, 'Sufism is the spirit of religion which revolts against the corpus of religion once it realizes that the spirit is perishing and the corpus is uprooting it.'⁴⁸

Ayn al-Quzat Hamadani, one of the luminaries of Iranian Sufism, whose soul Shari'ati believed had sometimes entered his body⁴⁹ and to whom he regularly referred, instructed the wayfarer who sought the revelation of the Truth to abandon 'tradition-worshipping' since it was nothing but idolatry.⁵⁰ Shari'ati's bold proclamation that 'those who become religious through the intermediary of the Prophet are superficial and worthless beings,'⁵¹ reflects the elitist indignation of the Sufis with common religious beliefs of the appearance-conscious masses. To the Sufi, the purpose of life was to see the true light. Religion and its rituals could at best be considered a means, yet never the end. Drawing an analogy between different religions and colours, Ayn al-Quzat wrote in a poem, 'this colour is all whim (*havas*) or presumption (*pendasht*), He (*ou*) is colourless, one should have His colour.'⁵² Ayn al-Quzat implied that the Sufi path which was 'colourless' was the authentic path to God. Shari'ati repeated the very same idea in a modern form and concluded, 'one can be a faithful Muslim, a religionless faithful, a Christian faithful, a Jewish faithful or a Buddhist faithful.'⁵³ Having tried all religions, Shari'ati had come to the conclusion that only Sufism, the embodiment of all religions could appease him. This was what he came to call his 'new perception of Islam.'⁵⁴ Emphasizing the fact that seeking God was the subject and religion a mere predicate, he registered his preference for the Sufi's path to God over the mainstream school of obtaining the grace of God through submission to Him and the pursuit of Islamic rules and regulations (*shari'a*).

Rejecting loyalty to religious establishments, Shari'ati declared the search for attaining 'the unity of Being' (*vahdat-e wujud*) as the basis of all true religions

which was primarily a personal and independent task.⁵⁵ Shari'ati declared that, 'this world and the hereafter, natural and supernatural, spirit and body, matter and meaning are all unified and integrated and are each a dimension or aspect of one 'Existing Truth.'⁵⁶ The search for *ou* or He, required a special kind of vision which was beyond the grasp of reason or philosophy. This vision, Shari'ati called *hekmat* or theosophy.⁵⁷ Sufism, was a process of personal soul searching in order to attain the ultimate 'source and [absolute] sincerity [in one's intentions and acts] (*ikhlas*).'⁵⁸

Disgusted by institutionalized Sufism, which had developed its own establishment, rites and rituals, Shari'ati argued that in Sufism there are no such things as 'convents (*khaneqah*), sects (*ferqeh*) or poles (*qotb*).'⁵⁹ Holding Ibn Arabi responsible for the institutionalization and systematization of Sufism, Shari'ati charged that under his influence, 'whoever got to learn the stages and grades [of the Sufi path] came to be considered as a Sufi, whereas Sufism is unattainable through learning.'⁶⁰ Shari'ati rejected the systematization of an experience which he believed was a gift from God. Theosophy or *hekmat*, the alleged knowledge of God, was obtained by direct mystical insight and could not be learnt through the intellect. Through God's grace, *hekmat* was bestowed upon whomever He willed.⁶¹ The receptive organ of God's illumination was the heart (*del*) which enabled the chosen ones to receive the signals of God. The task of the Sufi was to unveil the heart and prepare it for the reception of divine revelations. Without this conscious effort (*kushesh*) on the part of the individual it was impossible to experience the Truth. In the Sufi tradition, Shari'ati explained, the heart had nothing to do with the biological organ that pumped blood; it was a spiritual organ.⁶²

As emphatically as he praised the function of the heart, Shari'ati derided the role of reason and intellect (*'aql*), which was only capable of 'knowing and not understanding' and of 'deception'.⁶³ He believed that the attainment of a 'new vision' and the discovery of the 'Truth', could not be successfully accomplished through 'studying, books and going to classes.'⁶⁴ He repeatedly questioned the explanatory power and the cognitive ability of science and reason, exclaiming 'woe, that reason does not comprehend such things.'⁶⁵ In the accounts of his own gnostic experiences Shari'ati often refers to a Divine power which regularly drew him into His own domain, thus facilitating his journey along the Path. This involuntary divine attraction (*keshesh*) may be contrasted with the conscious effort (*kushesh*) on the part of an individual to understand the Truth. Shari'ati could be considered as one of those who believed that without 'involuntary divine attraction' (*keshesh*) one could not experience God. At times, in somewhat contradictory statements, Shari'ati affirmed the necessity of a spiritual guide (*pir*) to whose authority one had to submit.⁶⁶ The spiritual guide is supposed to direct the wayfarer through 'the three stages of mystical life, the Law, the Path and the Truth'.⁶⁷ Those whom Shari'ati referred to as his spiritual guides, except in the case of Khazr, were somewhat unconventional figures.

In Shari'ati's scattered gnostic writings we find two seemingly contradictory self-evaluations in relation to theosophy or the knowledge of God obtained through direct mystical insight. At times, he maintained that he did not possess theosophy (*hekmat*).⁶⁸ Affirming that theosophy could only be had by God's desire, Shari'ati lamented that doing as He pleased, God had not willed him (Shari'ati) to possess it. Opining that he was 'predetermined' to become an 'admirer (*dustar*) of theosophy', he seemed resigned to God's will. Yet elsewhere, in a story, Shari'ati recounts that having objected to the station that God had predetermined for him, God ordered the Guarded Tablet (*lowh-e mahfuz*) to be rewritten in order to alter Shari'ati's fate and destiny according to his own wish.⁶⁹ The *tour de force* in Shari'ati's plot provides him with a privileged and distinguished position in the eyes of God; a position different from all mortals. 'Henceforth,' Shari'ati wrote, 'I learnt the mystery of eternity.'⁷⁰ Therefore, it can be argued that according to his own account, even though Shari'ati was not chosen to be a theosophist, God's will eventually made him one.

Mystical Experiences

In *Kavir*, Shari'ati provides a historical account of gnostic tendencies among his paternal ancestors. He recounts the 'mysterious state of [divine] attraction (*jazbeh*)' of his great grandfather, and narrates how the villagers thought of him as a 'semi-Imam, semi-Prophet, an angel, a saint (friend of God or *awliya* Allah)'.⁷¹ He even lists the thaumaturgic gifts (*keramat*) that were attributed to him. According to Shari'ati, some of the villagers claimed that after his death, they had seen 'a light descend on his grave and return back to the sky.' Eighteen years later the villagers are said to have discovered that his grave was completely empty, suggesting that the light must have taken his body up to the Heavens.⁷² Shari'ati takes great pride in the mysterious gnosticism of his lineage, suggesting that half a century before he was born he must have inhabited his great grandfather's body.⁷³ Yet he points out that although his forefathers spent their entire life searching for Him (*ou*), he was the only one of the family who eventually found Him. Shari'ati wrote, 'This is His shadow; He (*ou*) who suddenly appeared on my path; He in search of Whom my forefathers spent their lives and did not succeed in finding.'⁷⁴

Shari'ati's first chronological account of a mystical experience dates back to his fifth grade.⁷⁵ He maintains that one day on his way to school he heard the ringing of a bell, which pinned him to the ground, sent tremors through his body and caused his head to gyrate. He then had a vision of a green pentagram that shot down from the sky like a thunderbolt and pierced through his eyes and eventually found its way to his heart; then he lost its trace. Shari'ati indicates that for many years he tried to understand the meaning of this happening and finally he wrote; 'is this not the same story as that of the Holy Prophet?'.⁷⁶

In the narration of his vision Shari'ati uses terms, marks, signs and symbols

which are alluded to by other Sufis at the time of their illumination. Both Bayazid-e Bastami and Abu Sa'id Abolkheir are said to have had visions in their childhood.⁷⁷ Therefore, Shari'ati's reference to his young age is not unprecedented. The ringing of the bell is the symbolism used, for example, by Jili to describe his illumination.⁷⁸ The green pentagram is a metaphor for the flash of knowledge and insight that God bestows upon whom He chooses. The light Shari'ati suggests had struck his heart is a reference to the classical experience of 'unveiling' by Sufis, whereby God reaches and purifies the previously shrouded heart of the individual so that he may see the Truth. Abolkheir is thus said to have exclaimed; 'A light appeared in my chest and the veils were lifted.'⁷⁹

Shari'ati's second mystical experience occurred 'during those years between infancy and youth'.⁸⁰ Shari'ati explains how his thirst for first hand experience and unmediated understanding prompted him to accompany and observe a group of men who were excavating a waterway (*qanat*). The group was led by an old man from Yazd who was 'dexterous, kind and masterful' as well as 'a great and mysterious spirit'.⁸¹ It was this old man who taught Shari'ati 'a mysterious lesson' the full scope of which he could not comprehend for many years to come. The man, Shari'ati believes, was 'appointed' to 'awaken' and 'teach' him lessons that could only be taught through 'symbolism' and not 'lecture notes, a blackboard and chalk'.⁸² The lesson was 'the first line of the book of theosophy (*hekmat*)'.⁸³ Rhetorically, Shari'ati asks, 'was it not he who appeared in the guise of Khazr to Moses, in the cast of Shams to Mowlana, in the name of Gabriel to Mohammad, in the mysterious spirit of the Holy Ghost to Mary and in Massignon's silence, glance, smile, memory, words and name to me?'⁸⁴ The term Shari'ati uses for the verb to appear is *tajali*, or divine manifestation. He wrote, 'I believe that he was not just an expert at digging underground waterways (*moqani*), but He (*ou*).'⁸⁵ The old man's act of digging in to the veins of the earth for water found its resonance in the unclogging of Shari'ati's heart. Once the flow of water touched Shari'ati's bare toes, his unveiled heart was also flooded with the bubbling of inner knowledge. This was Shari'ati's initiation ceremony.

The hagiography of Sufis is replete with reports of encounters between them and Khazr during which they are taught lessons, the immediate significance of which is difficult if not impossible to comprehend. Khazr is said to appear only to those chosen by God and an encounter would, therefore, indicate that the person visited is among the *awliya* or the Sufi saints. Shari'ati shows that he considered himself a Sufi saint.

His own writings reveal that from the seventh to the end of the ninth grade, or between 1947 and 1950, Shari'ati was drawn to the study of gnosticism. During this period, he does not recall any particular mystical experience. Yet he explains that after a period of philosophical confusion, which led him to the idea of suicide at the the Estakhr-e Kuhsangi in Mashhad, it was the mystical thoughts and words of Mowlavi's *Masnavi* that saved him from self-destruction. It is apparently after this experience that Shari'ati plunged into the study of the works of Sufi saints.

Explaining his state of mind at the time he wrote: 'I endured the dark night of life in the hope of the sunrise of death, the sun rose, but it was not that of death, to my surprise it was another sun, that of gnosticism (*erfan*)'.⁸⁶ He recalled that at this time he spent most of his time collecting and noting the wisdom of illustrious Sufi's such as Juneid, Hallaj, Qazi Abu Sa'id, Qashiri, Abu Sa'id-e Abolkheir and Bayazid-e Bastami.⁸⁷

Shari'ati recalled an extraordinary experience on 26 April 1958, a few months before his marriage.⁸⁸ Comparing his room to the cave of Hara, where Mohammad had received his first revelation, he recounted that it was 'in such a lonely and secluded cave that he had gone to sleep'.⁸⁹ He dreamt that he was under the quiet, calm, moonless, yet star-studded sky of the desert when suddenly an angel appeared and 'recited the message of revelation down unto the uneducated (*ummi*) heart of a silent and dispirited man who sat under the rainfall of thoughts in the deserted solitude of the Hara mountain, and then quickly vanished into the sky'.⁹⁰ Shari'ati could not properly recall whether he was asleep or awake during his vision, yet upon waking up, he discovered his ability to speak a different language.

This may be construed as Shari'ati's account of how he came to speak his words of ecstasy. Comparing himself to the celebrated Sufi of Hamadan, Baba Taher-e Oryan, Shari'ati recounted that just as Baba Taher had sunk under the water and thence emerged an *aref* (gnostic), he too woke up and suddenly realized that a new type of speech, to which until that day he had been completely alien was 'boiling like a spring from within him'.⁹¹ The 'pure, powerful and passionate inner spring filled him until it overflowed'.⁹²

As symbolic as Shari'ati's story may be, in this account, he draws a parallel between Mohammad's Prophethood and his own experience. Recounting his vision in the fifth grade, Shari'ati had also compared his own experience with that of the Prophet. Was Shari'ati trying to build a case for his own ability and right to express words of ecstasy (*shathiyat*)? Was he justifying his membership among the *awliya*, the Sufi saints, or was he even reaching further?

In these stories, Shari'ati may be subtly alluding to his experience of the three stages of certainty (*yaqin*) or faith in the unseen, which a wayfarer may experience, in the process of enlightenment. He writes, 'after *elm al-yaqin* or the stage of certainty and conviction through knowledge, one is thirsty for feeling, desperately in need of vision and longs for audition'.⁹³ This is the stage of *ayn al-yaqin* or certitude and conviction through the vision or sighting of God before attaining the final stage of *haqq al-yaqin* when one attains the ultimate certainty through absolute unity.

Annihilation and Assimilation in God

According to Sufis, the survival of the self or the human ego (*nafs*) constitutes the greatest impediment to experiencing the divine presence. The self becomes a veil

between the individual and God, preventing the individual from the ultimate objective of union. Satisfying the self, the source of evil, forces the individual's surrender to all worldly temptations and pleasures. To understand, feel and finally witness the Truth, he or she has to annihilate the self. The veil is then lifted, and having fulfilled the requirements for experiencing God, the individual awaits ultimate recompense through audition, sight or union. Sufis have provided different accounts of their psychological and physical feelings, tribulations and sufferings during these final stages. Bewilderment and delirium from a burning love, ambivalence towards the outside world and even appearing mad, uttering meaningless, sometimes outrageous statements are some of the characteristics of such Sufis.

Shari'ati's process of mystical self-annihilation is somehow connected with an identity crisis which led to his introversion and self-assessment. In 1965, he recalled that back in 1958, the year of one of his visions, he was confronted with the question, 'which one am I?'⁹⁴ He recounts that his only 'art, power and asset' in life was his ability to shut himself from the outside world and seek safety and sanctuary in his solitude.⁹⁵ Then suddenly, one day, the security of being alone with himself gave way to the uncertainty of who this 'himself' really was? His identity crisis dispirited and saddened him. He needed to identify his 'selves', to fight them. Paraphrasing Hafez's line he acknowledged that, 'I am my own veil and I should be lifted'.⁹⁶ Just as he had distinguished between the object and its shadows in the realm of religion, he subjected himself to the same analytical procedure. As he looked at his shadows on the wall, he distinguished many personalities that were alone or in combination viewed as the authentic Ali Shari'ati by outsiders.

First, he identified a religious and faithful self, whose orientation was towards Mecca. Second, he recognized a rational and Cartesian self, who did not possess faith. Whereas the religious self was born in Medina, this rational self was born in Athens and alien to Medina.⁹⁷ The third self was that of a young author and orator. It was the personality that was more renowned than the others and had obtained some fame; yet according to Shari'ati it was the self most alien to him.⁹⁸ The fourth self was that of a brave hero. It represented the adventurer, the dare-devil popular revolutionary, bent on avenging the disinherited of this world. This self thrived on breaking asunder the chains of the people and basked in the applause and the praise of the people. This was Shari'ati's political personality.⁹⁹ Finally Shari'ati acknowledged his fifth personality or self, which he maintained was the last to blossom in him. This novel self was the one he had long waited for; it was his real or gnostic self.¹⁰⁰

Shari'ati's account of his inner transformations imparts a sense of rapid unfolding. Having searched for all his selves to 'sacrifice at His altar', suddenly Shari'ati acknowledges that He (*ou*) has 'through His own miracle set foot within him'.¹⁰¹ Then, seemingly powerless before what has overcome him, he asks 'What should I call that which is completely engulfing me? I? God? Absolute Truth? Absolute?'¹⁰² By raising the issue of God's presence within him, Shari'ati raises the highly controversial issue of infusion, indwelling or incarnation (*hulul*). The concept of

incarnation or *hulul* has been refuted and often labelled as heretical by most Sufi luminaries.¹⁰³ A reading of Shari'ati's work on this topic demonstrates a close resemblance between his experience and Ayn al-Qozat's concept of 'the perfection of union and oneness'. In this most elevated stage of love, according to Ayn al-Qozat, any distinction between the lover and the beloved becomes impossible.¹⁰⁴

Shari'ati's string of mystical experiences alluding to the 'perfection of union and oneness' if not incarnation can be divided into two stages. First, that of being overcome and engulfed by an outside power. 'Someone else,' Shari'ati writes, 'has stepped into me and made me so reckless that I feel I can no longer occupy myself.'¹⁰⁵ Second, that of coexistence between him and the outside force. Shari'ati seems to evoke the constant presence of God at his side, a presence that at times is fused with him rendering distinction between the two impossible. In a long narrative, he recounts this ultimate stage as follows:

He is never here, yet I always see Him. I eat alone and He is always at my side. He always eats with me. He eats from the same plate, drinks from the same glass and uses the same spoon. Sometimes I find the spoon that I have filled [to feed myself] in His mouth and sometimes I find the spoon that He has filled [to feed Himself] in my mouth. Sometimes He drinks from the glass of water or milk that I raise to my lips and sometimes I find myself drinking from the glass of water or milk that He has filled. Sometimes I find Him in the form of my pen, disobeying my orders while between my fingers and writing whatever He pleases and I am His stunned audience, the reader of the confused and melancholic writings of His, mine.¹⁰⁶

Finally Shari'ati pronounces a phrase, variants of which had led to the banishment and execution of many Persian Sufis before him. 'Ayn al-Quzat Hamadani, whom Shari'ati refers to as his brother and Hallaj with whom he constantly identifies, were both executed for, among other things, having identified themselves with God. Bayazid-e Bastami's statement, which Shari'ati used as a description of his own condition, expresses yet another variant of this 'perfection of union and oneness.'¹⁰⁷ Bayazid says: 'I shed my self (*nafs*) as a snake sheds its skin, then I looked at myself, and behold! I was He.'¹⁰⁸ Gradually building to the climax of his experience, Shari'ati states; 'I do not know which is the correct statement. Should I say that I am He (*ou*) or that He is me and I do not know the difference. That which exists and is more alive, clearer, heavier and brighter than I, is that we are [the same] one another (*ma ham-im*)'.¹⁰⁹

As if truly born after the veil of unknowing was lifted, and in the tradition of all great Sufis who refused to accept the veiled years of ignorance and darkness as a part of their lives, Shari'ati employed dates reflecting the time elapsed after his experience of indwelling or 'the perfection of union and oneness'. According to Hujwiri, when Bayazid Bastami was asked about his age, he replied, 'four years'. When he was asked how that could be, he replied, 'I have been veiled from God by this world for seventy years, but I have seen Him during the last four years: the period in which one is veiled does not belong to one's life.'¹¹⁰ In the same vein,

instead of referring to standard years, Shari'ati provided discernable days and months yet he also referred to year two, or the second year after birth.¹¹¹ In one case he even refers to the third year after Prophethood (*be'sat*).¹¹² By referring to year two, Shari'ati intended to inform his initiated readers that it had only been two years since he had seen Him and that the veil was lifted. The years of the 'old calender', to which he alluded, were once again a reference to his own gnostic pre-history.¹¹³

To express his illuminations, revelations and inspirations, Shari'ati drew on the symbols, signs, psychic and physical conditions of the Sufis before him. Like Bayazid, Shari'ati spoke of the experience of his ascent and meeting with God (*me'raj*), comparable to the Prophet's ascension to heaven.¹¹⁴ He described the miraculous firework of erupting colourful stars, setting fire to the darkness and punctuating the age-old lull of the barren desert.¹¹⁵ Shari'ati's imagery in this narrative resembles accounts of the night of Mohammad's Prophethood.¹¹⁶ Feeling exalted and misunderstood at the end of his mystical journey, Shari'ati wrote, 'I am the Hallaj of this town and no one understands my language, my pain, my love, my religion, my life, my insanity, my wailing and my silence.'¹¹⁷

Gnosticism and Politics

Shari'ati's deep involvement with gnosticism after his return to Iran may be attributed to three interrelated factors: his sense of disorientation or even cultural shock after his return to Mashhad; his disappointment with his social environment and the preoccupations and concerns of those close to him, and his weariness of political activism.

Shari'ati's gnostic experience required introversion, sequestration, detachment from people, dislike of worldliness and disinterest towards everything but He. Shari'ati's later writings demonstrate that at some time around 1969 he must have confronted a major ontological dilemma. He still felt a deep sense of social responsibility. Some of his Sufi idols like Bayazid Bastami, however, relentlessly repelled their flock of followers and admirers since they believed that concern for the people distracted them from God.¹¹⁸ Caught between his sense of moral and social obligation and the personal satisfaction of gnostic pursuits, Shari'ati sought to reconcile the two. As if justifying his urge to get back among the people, exercising his moral, social and political leadership, Shari'ati wrote, 'I would have liked to sit in a corner gazing at a patch of sky until God took away my life.' But, Shari'ati added that, like the Prophet, he too was commissioned to mingle with the people and live among them.¹¹⁹

In his analysis of the role of Sufism in the history of Islam, Shari'ati identified two contradictory dimensions.¹²⁰ The first was characterized by anti-worldliness and the pursuit of inner peace. This Sufi current was based on the pietistic devotion of the practitioner's entire life to the search and eventual communion with

the Truth. The life of those who practised this anti-social brand of Sufism was essentially based on introspection, introversion and recluse. Shari'ati's found this brand of Sufism undesirable because of the socio-political apathy it generated. He saw it as effectively collaborationist, a source of alienation, resignation and acquiescence and an elitist school in which the majority were sacrificed for the sake of a chosen few. It was the perpetrator of indifference and quietism towards 'poverty, dictatorship, illiteracy, hunger, disease and corruption' and the 'poisonous sleeping potion' of 'Sufi-Safavid' Shi'ism.¹²¹ In his lectures during 1972 at Ershad, as if trying to settle scores with an important part of his own life, Shari'ati cited both Bayazid-e Bastami and Hallaj as examples of alienated Sufis.¹²² Furthermore in defining his concept of Safavid Shi'ism, the symbol of a reactionary, quietist and collaborationist Islam surviving only in a symbiotic relationship with state tyranny and economic exploitation, Shari'ati identified Sufism along with monarchy and ethnicity as its constituent elements.¹²³

The second type of Sufism, which Shari'ati saw as positive, was characterized by heroism, aggressiveness, and a tendency to challenge the status quo.¹²⁴ He saw this as a libertarian school of thought and practice which taught the individual how to obtain his freedom from the chains of religion, the ruling classes and all other oppressive forces.¹²⁵ Shari'ati argued that historically it had rebelled against repression, despotism and the 'decadence, aberration and hollowness of Islam'.¹²⁶ Sufism, therefore, had the potential to become an 'anti-religious movement' rebelling against a soulless Islam of 'restrictions and obligations'.¹²⁷

Searching for a socially committed, politically combative Sufi discourse combining the positive personal aspects of gnosticism with a social commitment to justice and freedom, Shari'ati looked into historical religio-political movements. Sa'id Nafisi, whose works, especially on Sufism, were read by Shari'ati, believed that Sufism in Iran was cultivated not only among the elite; the same notions and principles were also propagated among the common people under the name of *futuwwat*.¹²⁸ Sufi chivalry, or *futuwwat* referred to the practice of those gnostics whose lives were the incarnation of all that was noble and honourable.¹²⁹ Members of this kind of Sufi order were known for their love of their fellow beings, a sense of compassion that led them to become symbols and legends of hospitality, generosity and bravery. The *fatiyan* or *javanmardan*, as members of these orders are called, were reputed for their selflessness in the face of just and noble causes. Inspired by the Qur'anic verses in which the term *fata* is used, Qusheiri defines *fata* as 'he who breaks the idols'.¹³⁰ Following the true model of Sufi saints, *fatiyan* (plural for *fata*) helped the needy and the distressed, liberated those who were subjected to tyrannical rule, brought food to the hungry and provided the people with spiritual and moral guidance. In these orders, the Sufi was no longer an introverted hermitic wayfarer, but a heroic fighter for just and honourable causes. As truly selfless champions of the people they accepted their trials as would any true lover in search of his Beloved. *Futuwwat* combined the Sufi's 'love of God, love of His creation and love of Love' with a sense of 'fearless struggle against

tyranny'.¹³¹ Imam Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law and the role-model for all Shi'ites exemplifies the ideal type of a *fata*. Shari'ati too, acknowledges Ali as the loftiest and most distinguished symbol of *futuwwat*.¹³² He also applies the term to Zeinab, Imam Hossein's sister, whom Shari'ati admired greatly.¹³³ In the many treatise on Sufi chivalry called *futuwwatnameh*, Ali, Salman Farsi, and Abu Muslim Khorasani, all heroes of Shari'ati, appear as members of the order.¹³⁴

In the *Fatiyan* Shari'ati found an order that blended the love of God with social action for justice and equality or the love of one's fellow beings. On a more personal level, he identified with the exemplary behaviour of the members of this order who welcomed pain and accepted self-inflicted discomfort in order to alleviate the misfortunes of others.¹³⁵ Shari'ati adopted the Sarbedaran movement as the archetype of a social struggle rooted in the *futuwwat* tradition.¹³⁶ This twelfth-century religious and socio-political movement originated in Baashtin close to Sabzevar in Khorasan and led to the gradual liberation of Iran from the tyranny of Mongol rule. According to Shari'ati, the 'Sarbedaran' movement was the synthesis of revolutionary Sufism and Shi'ism.¹³⁷ Shi'ism, according to Shari'ati, opposed the tyranny of the caliph and thus as an anti-caliphate movement attracted the masses. Sufism, he believed, appealed to the intellectuals since it opposed the Shari'a as it was used by the Islamic jurists to support the caliphate.¹³⁸ Sheikh Khalifeh, the ideological mentor of the movement who preached resistance against the injustice of both the political and religious rulers of the time, was a Shi'i gnostic. Sheikh Hassan Jory who succeeded him and invited the people to go into hiding and prepare for armed struggle was also a Sufi. Both these men were also said to be anti-feudal egalitarians.¹³⁹ To Shari'ati they had 'sown the seeds of consciousness and revolution on the basis of Shi'ism' and 'subjectively prepared the masses'.¹⁴⁰ Shari'ati acclaimed the Sarbedaran's three pronged struggle against the class system, the Sunni clerical establishment and the powerful feudal lords.¹⁴¹

Even though Shari'ati had enumerated the social problems that Sufism could pose, for him, Sufism and revolutionary struggle were not mutually exclusive. In a way Shari'ati argued that an individual's gnostic experience was an educational process which paved the way for the meaningful dedication of one's life to the cause of the people. By the time the Sufi wayfarer is free of all worldly chains including his love for life and ready to be accepted by Him, he has acquired all the attributes of a true warrior for the cause of God. The stage is thus set for Shari'ati to build the bridge and claim that 'Islam invites the individual who wishes to experience God to annihilate or negate himself in the people or the creatures of God'.¹⁴² Thus Shari'ati replaces the Sufi concept of self-annihilation and subsequent assimilation or living in God with self-annihilation and subsequent assimilation or living in 'the people'. This is certainly a novel interpretation. According to it, Che Guevara becomes an armed and socially responsible reincarnation of Hallaj and 'Ayn al-Quzat Hamadani. They are both selfless martyrs of Love. In his search for revolutionary gnostics, Shari'ati presented Imam Ali and Abu Zarr as outstanding symbols.¹⁴³

In the last years of his life, Shari'ati returned to the development of an idea that was always dear to him. At Ershad, he told his students that gnosticism as a social phenomenon was an opium which led to inertia.¹⁴⁴ After his release from prison in 1975, seeking to increase the religious component of his ideology, he returned to gnosticism as a school of thought which is both Islamic and anti-clerical. He argued that historically the quest for gnosticism, freedom and egalitarianism had constituted the three main pillars of human nature and had therefore generated three momentous social movements.¹⁴⁵ Shari'ati maintained that the successful development of the ideal Islamic individual necessitated an ideology which would liberate God and his love from the monopoly of religion, freedom from the monopoly of capitalism, and egalitarianism from the monopoly of Marxism.¹⁴⁶ Such a doctrine or ideology would allow individuals to reach their loftiest human capacities.¹⁴⁷ Shari'ati argued for the teaching of a gnostic Islam, completely divorced from the teachings of traditional and superstitious Islam.¹⁴⁸ This 'gnostic substance' as he called it, if taught at around the age of fifteen, would act as an antidote to immunize the young against Marxist materialism and Western bourgeois thought which emanated from capitalism.¹⁴⁹

In *Kavir*, Shari'ati presented gnosticism as a libertarian doctrine in contrast to institutionalized religion. Later, in the early 1970s, he rejected it as a social menace. In his last years, he once again resuscitated it as an incontestable ingredient of his Islamic ideology. With hindsight, one could present his mystical writings as an initiation for the potential revolutionary who needed to destroy his own ego, denouncing all worldly attachments before reaching God through liberating His subjects. To the critics of the gloomy and melancholy style of his mystical writings, Shari'ati said, 'But shouldn't he who is responsible for constructing also learn to destroy? This is why the reader of *Kavir*, who might stagnate in *Kavir*, and what a catastrophe that would be, could just as well 'wash and purify' himself in *Kavir* before setting out to seek 'martyrdom'. For Chandel, 'only he could die for the cause of love, for whom life has already died.'¹⁵⁰

Fictive Mind

Shari'ati provides a key to the understanding and unveiling of his fictive characters and situations. He makes a distinction between false and improper realities or belying occurrences on the one hand and truthful unrels on the other. He poses a number of rhetorical questions which provide a point of entry into his world of fiction and fantasy. Is Prometheus' myth real? Did it actually happen the way it is said to have happened? Was he really chained to a rock in the Caucasus after he stole the fire from Olympus and gave it to man? Is the story a lie or a fake since it is unreal? Does the fact that it is a myth in any way diminish its grandiose importance and the significance of its message?

In Shari'ati's view only the mediocre believe that all that is real is truthful and all that is unreal and has not actually happened, a lie. For him, contrary to general opinion, there are many truths that are lies since they never happened, and there are many lies that are real. 'There are so many truths, absolute, proper and becoming truths that have not attained body, weight, colour and presence.'¹ What is essential to Shari'ati is not the actual occurrence of an event or the authentic existence of a character but the necessity of conceiving, developing and depicting a significant occurrence, individual, art form or message. The ideal individual, the exemplary poetic verse, the perfect gnostic love story portraying the depths of metaphysical attraction and divine beauty is what is true in Shari'ati's eyes. It is this fictive truth that he sets out to create whenever he feels the need. Yet his fictive truth is always rooted in reality. One foot in the real and one in fantasy: thus is the child of an intelligent game of association born. Is Shari'ati trying to tell us that this semi-fictive mix is what myths are made of?

In a lecture to students at the Petroleum University in Abadan, Shari'ati discussed an ascending group of intellectuals, stars who stood out from mainstream intellectuals, people who challenged prevailing perceptions, ideologies, interpretations and theories.² Familiarity with them and their works was, he said, necessary to grasp this new trend and he urged his students to take note of their names. His list included Ionesco, Genon, Carrel, Fanon, Sartre, Ozgun, Heidegger, Jaspers, Einstein, Planck, de Castro, Mouloud, Eliot and Yasin. In the middle of it was a man called Professor Chandel.³

In this lecture, Shari'ati described Chandel as a multi-dimensional person with a degree of *ijtihad* from the centres of Islamic learning in Northern Africa and the Maghreb. He was a friend of Camus and Sartre and one of the most outstanding writers and thinkers of this century. Shari'ati invited his audience to study his works and cited four: *The Sociology of Imitation*, *The Anxiety of Being*, *Where is our Mainstay* and *The Principle of Indetermination*. While Shari'ati's students were carefully noting what they believed to be extremely important information, their teacher must have been amused at what he was doing. A generation educated through Shari'ati's works has been led to believe and still believes that Chandel is a real person. Those interested in Shari'ati's works as amateurs, and even professionals carrying out academic research have come to accept the reality of Professor Chandel. Some have even wondered why the world has not taken sufficient notice of such an exceptional mind. As the public were bemused, Shari'ati must have marvelled at the power and magic of his words. From the ashes of his mind he had created a fictive truth or a myth that people continued to accept as a reality.

Shari'ati, Sham', Chandel

Chandel is the product of Shari'ati's fictive mind – the child of a game of interlingual association and a play on words, a game at which Shari'ati was a master. Chandel is the twin which Shari'ati created for himself to say what he could not say outright, give further authority to his views and help him out when he needed the intellectual support of one who would say exactly what Shari'ati wanted him to say. Shari'ati was more than the ventriloquist behind Professor Chandel's words. He had painted a self-portrait which he had called Chandel. Shari'ati's depiction of Chandel was based on his own self-image and self-assessment.

Shari'ati had conceived of his own pen-name, Sham', the Persian for candle. The first time he used it was in an article published in the daily *Khorasan*.⁴ Shari'ati hints that Sham' is nothing other than the composition of the first letters of his own full name: 'sh stands for Shari'ati, m for Mazinani and 'ayn for 'Ali. Having created a character from a simple intellectual exercise, Shari'ati rhetorically asks, 'but is this Sham' (candle) not I?'⁶ As if explaining a metamorphosis, he demonstrates an ever growing 'special and invisible bond' between himself and Sham' (hereafter Candle) leading to an ever increasing resemblance between the two, to the extent that Shari'ati begins to confuse himself with Candle.⁷ Yet there remains another secret which Shari'ati does not wish to divulge. Wishing to whet the appetite of his reader, Shari'ati mentions 'another extraordinary and remarkable' relationship between himself and Candle, one that may not be revealed for the time being.⁸

Inspired by his own Persian pen-name, Shari'ati cloned another candle, this time in French; Chandel. Typical of Shari'ati, instead of using someone else's name or any already-existing name, thereby operating under a stranger's mask, his double

was a transparent image of himself. To Expose him, however, needed decoding, and in turn some homework and imagination on the part of the investigator. Whereas revolutionaries, writers and poets would look for an alias or someone else's identity, Shari'ati deconstructed his own name, reconstructed it in a meaningful manner and used it as a pen-name. He then translated it recreating a new being. In this process something seemingly new was produced from the old. Chandel is a fictive truth. Unveiling and understanding Chandel brings greater comprehension of Shari'ati as he viewed himself.

In 1903, a young doctor by the name of Louis Lerrac accompanied a group of very sick people on pilgrimage to Lourdes. There after apparently witnessing a miracle Lerrac regained his faith.⁹ Doctor Louis Lerrac, who narrated his experience in a book was no other than Alexis Carrel, who had transposed his own name. Carrel too had created a fictive truth. Shari'ati had read this work in French while he was in Paris and even referred to it.¹⁰ An admirer of Carrel's works, he might have also been impressed by the way Carrel had given a new identity to himself by giving birth to Lerrac.

In Shari'ati's writings, latinized (non-Persian) references to his identical twin, are often spelt Chandel sometimes Shandel and even Schandel.¹¹ Chandel is sometimes given the initials 'M. E.' or 'M.e'.¹² The choice of initials 'M.e' is not accidental. Engaging in another game of association, Shari'ati is informing his readers that Chandel is I (me). On different occasions, Chandel is said to have different religions, occupations and nationalities. Furthermore, Shari'ati attributes to him the authorship of many books, a few of which include precise references to particular publishing houses and dates. None of these references, however, can actually be found. Even the discrepancies in relation to Chandel's identity and attributes are intentional. At one level, Shari'ati intends to demonstrate that Chandel is a fictive character. The spelling of his name, like his religion, nationality, occupation or books, is insignificant. What is crucial to Shari'ati, however, is to leave clues behind which would prove that Chandel is Shari'ati. At another level, Shari'ati wishes to demonstrate that he too is a man of many identities, religions, nationalities, occupations and volumes. Shari'ati candidly informs his readers that he has always played the role of numerous characters in his life.¹³

Chandel is said to be an African poet,¹⁴ a North African writer of French origin,¹⁵ a writer in the French language born in Algeria,¹⁶ a sociologist,¹⁷ a composer,¹⁸ a music teacher living in Rome,¹⁹ a linguist,²⁰ an expert in the history of religions,²¹ a prominent geographer who spent a year studying two great oceans in which he finally drowned,²² a Tunisian writer with a doctrine on the compatibility of colours with individuals,²³ a prominent Islamologist rumoured never to perform his daily prayers,²⁴ a renowned contemporary Islamologist, who knew Islam better than Khadija (the Prophet's wife) who had also learnt her Islam 'through direct revelation',²⁵ a compatriot of Tagore,²⁶ and a revolutionary who was the hope of the young generation and was eventually martyred in Tunisia.²⁷ As for his religious convictions, Chandel is introduced as a devout and dogmatic Muslim,²⁸ a

fervent and dogmatic Christian who spent all his life studying and correcting the Bible,²⁹ and an eminent Jew hunted by Italian Fascists.³⁰

The list of Chandel's fictive books cited throughout Shari'ati's works, includes; 'One Dimensional Man'³¹, (probably borrowed from Marcuse's famous book) 'Tomorrow's Human Being'³², 'Behind the Masks'³³, 'Complete Works'³⁴, 'Les Causeries de la Solitude' (Conversations of Solitude), which is said to have been published in 1968 by Les Editions de Minuit in Tunisia (Minuit is a reputable French publishing house)³⁵, 'Les Cahiers Vert' (The Green Notebooks), which is said to have been published in Tunisia in 1969,³⁶ 'Les Cahiers Gris' (The Grey Notebooks) in three volumes³⁷ and 'Les lettres à Madame de la Chappelle' (Letters to Mme de la Chapelle)³⁸. The last four titles refer to collections of writings and poems on which Shari'ati himself was working. The controversial grey and green notebooks are thought to exist and are probably in the possession of Shari'ati's family.

In a biographical sketch, Chandel is said to be born in 1933³⁹ – the year Shari'ati was born. His father, who had a religious as well as a formal education came from a pious Protestant family. Shari'ati describes Chandel's father as an energetic, honest and intelligent man who had dedicated his life to his religious and social convictions. He was so totally immersed in the Algerian political scene that his only savings were an honourable name, books and faith.⁴⁰ Shari'ati's description of Chandel's father is a replica of his own. For Shari'ati, his father qualified as a Protestant since he too was a religious reformer. Chandel himself is portrayed as 'a great thinker who is somewhat of a philosopher, poet, politician, writer and many other things.'⁴¹ He is said to have inherited his 'gentle gnosticism' combined with 'violence, endurance and a sensitive soul' from his mother who was of Mongol stock. From his father, Chandel inherited his 'scientific and logical' approach along with his 'political and moralistic' spirit.⁴² Chandel is represented as an expert on worldly concerns and the preoccupations of human beings as well as their spiritual and religious needs.⁴³ In his own writings and speeches, Shari'ati alludes to a number of philosophical narratives and poems alleged to be translations from the works of Chandel. Chandel's words of wisdom on religion, politics, sociology and even matters pertaining to the arts are scattered throughout Shari'ati's works.

Chandel and Chapelle

Chandel's profile as outlined by Shari'ati is primarily serious and sober. He is depicted as a sensitive and politicized intellectual and activist, too devoted to the numerous causes he is engaged in to have time to think of anything else. But over Chandel's drab and sullen silhouette, Shari'ati paints a spirited, light-hearted and even frivolous image. Chandel is cast in a love story. Throughout his memoir-like writings published under the title of *Dialogues of Solitude*, Shari'ati describes a love affair between a Madame de la Chapelle and Chandel. In a footnote, we are informed that Madame de la Chapelle's first name is Rosas, a name which appears

independently and frequently in these writings.⁴⁴

According to Shari'ati, the Sufis and the practitioners of Eastern mystical religions in ancient Iran and India used an intoxicating flower which was called Huma in Iran and Suma in India. This flower provided an ecstatic state of absorption in God.⁴⁵ Shari'ati provides a generic name for this type of flower and calls it the 'Sufi's flower'. 'Rosas', Shari'ati claims, is Islam's version of the same Sufi's flower.⁴⁶ Apart from the obvious association between Rosas and a woman, Rosas could also be an allegory for a medium through which the Sufi wayfarer attains unity with the Beloved.

In a different story involving a girl that Shari'ati met at the Luxemburg gardens in Paris, he demonstrates his art of creating an image from a simple observation. He acknowledges that his mind creates the characters that he needs, with the words that he wants them to utter and the acts that he wishes them to perform.⁴⁷ Shari'ati admits that his imagination cuts across 'the eternal distance between the person who "is" and the person who ought to "be"'.⁴⁸ He wrote that the image of this girl was gradually becoming a 'Rosas' in his private life.⁴⁹ Here it seems as if Rosas applies to a fictive female with whom Shari'ati had become obsessed. Rosas could also be an allegory for any habit forming substance or idea without which one is at pain in life.

Shari'ati makes a number of references to his gradual addiction to the 'Sufi's flower'. He refers to it as a mixture of every conceivable intoxicating and hallucinogenic substance.⁵⁰ Yet, he says, 'this divine morsel', taken from God's banquet, becomes the only meaningful and gratifying thing in life, since it fills the individual with 'boundless divine inner knowledge'.⁵¹ Clearly Rosas is also meant to represent a medium to gnostic experiences. Shari'ati wants his readers to grasp this message. He declares that Rosas is to Chandel what Khazr was to Moses, Shams to Mowlana and Gabriel to Mohammad.⁵²

Shari'ati has no problems with fabricating an ideal spiritual model from any actually existing being. This is why all his semi-fictive characters such as Rosas Chapelle, Solange Bodin, and the girl at the Luxemburg gardens resemble one another in terms of their real or imagined innocence, virtuosity and goodness. As if purposefully wishing to demonstrate the gap between the real and the ideal, Shari'ati explains how he created a fictive spiritual angel out of a depressed girl he saw and observed at the Luxemburg gardens. He recounts how he lived every minute of his life with the thought of the girl's angelic image that he had created. Three years later, having met her by accident at a restaurant, he realizes that his saint-like beloved girl is a lively, enticing and erotic woman who tries to seduce him.⁵³ Confronted with a reality so opposed to his fictive truth, Shari'ati escapes it. From what he tells us, he seems to be pursuing a passion and a love that is spiritual in essence and worldly in form. He copes with the semi-earthly beloved as long as her natural expectations do not make demands on him. When the women in Shari'ati's semi-fictive stories demand worldly affection he is invited into a universe that he is not at ease with – the universe of the Don Juan not the Sufi gnostic.

The love story with Chapelle is full of mysteries. Even though the story seems fictive certain pieces of information about locations and characteristics are real. What makes this semi-fictive love story important is that some of the information and key places of rendez-vous referred to in it appear in another of Shari'ati's semi-fictive love stories. The love story between Chandel and Chapelle is the sequel to another semi-fictive and enigmatic romance between Shari'ati and a French girl called Solange. Chronologically, Shari'ati leaves behind traces which demonstrate that the Chandel and Chapelle episode occurs nine years after the end of his liaison with Solange. One could initially hypothesize that since Chandel is no less than Shari'ati then Chapelle could be another name for, an incarnation or manifestation of Solange.

If we were to take all the information provided by Shari'ati in his semi-fictive stories as genuine, we would be immediately shut out of his intimate and intricate thought process. Shari'ati too, needs guideposts and signals to get him through the maze he conjures. Even though at times he abandons his readers to their own fate in the midst of his labyrinths, he usually extends a helping hand. Looked at from a very rational perspective, the story of Chandel and Chapelle in Paris cannot possibly involve Shari'ati, since we know that he went back to Iran in June 1964. Yet Shari'ati is perfectly at ease with, and even prefers to take the hypothetically significant date of an event, change the name of its real actors and project them on to a different continent. So what seems to be going on in Paris could have actually or symbolically have occurred elsewhere.

Shari'ati introduces Chandel as a famous Jewish composer who teaches music in Rome's conservatory.⁵⁴ Chandel lives in Fascist Italy, where life is difficult if not impossible for Jews. Later in the story, Rome becomes Tunisia, which is in turn Shari'ati's euphemism for Iran.⁵⁵ It is during his stay in Rome that Chandel meets Chapelle.⁵⁶ Keeping in mind that Rosas and Chapelle are the same people, in one of Shari'ati's writings, Rosas is introduced as a beautiful Swedish Iranologue, who has dedicated her life to the comprehension of the true spirit of Islam.⁵⁷ Chapelle is described as one of the founders of Maghreb's revolutionary movement for independence and Chandel's comrade in arms.⁵⁸ In another reference, she is also described as an outstanding artist of the new wave.⁵⁹ In this story, however, she is a Jew, resembling a 'goddess from the East'.⁶⁰ Both Chandel and Chapelle feel hunted down in a country which seems to be filled with enemies. Gradually, they grow fond of each other until they discover that after their acquaintance, 'they can no longer bear life, Fascism and solitude'.⁶¹

Some four years later, on a Wednesday afternoon sometime in mid-October 1969, we are told that Chandel eagerly awaits the arrival of flight 615 from Belgium. Chapelle is coming to visit him in Paris.⁶² She arrives at Orly airport wearing a white fur hat, a light blue overcoat and a pair of boots.⁶³ From the airport, Chandel drives her to his home, a room at 15 Rue Lacroix in Clichy,⁶⁴ Shari'ati's home address.⁶⁵ Once at home, the couple remind themselves of their freedom in a country where mutual love is not a crime.⁶⁶ Chapelle is the subject of a prohibitive and

platonic love. A love that 'is not touched so that it could be sustained'.⁶⁷ They confess their love to one another and Chandel says 'we should drink one another sip by sip'.⁶⁸ This is a story about courting love. It does not seem to be a passing affair, a game or an adventure; it is based on mutual love and 'true faith'.⁶⁹ It is a passionate tale of a love made unattainable by choice. The story exudes a sense of intense joy not from 'having' but from 'desiring'. The implicit knowledge of the fact that 'having' would make banal a phenomenal and magical love shapes the relationship between the lovers. As the dialogue between the two unfolds throughout the night we discover that their attraction for one another is that of two separated and incomplete halves, seeking reunion. 'Maybe we have come so far to meet ourselves, there is no reunion more magnificent than that of reunion with oneself'.⁷⁰

Chapelle could be a worldly beloved, an aspect of Chandel/Shari'ati himself, Shari'ati's wife, the 'Sufi's flower' or perhaps the Beloved. The choice of the name Chapelle is to leave the issue indeterminate. Remember that Chandel is the author of the important work, 'The Principle of Indetermination'. At the same time there is a clear association between a candle and a chapel. The abode of the candle, where it finds its spiritual meaning, where it fulfills its illuminating purpose and finally its resting place is within the warm, holy and serene walls of the Chapel (Chapelle). Shari'ati leaves us to grapple with and guess at the true meaning and significance of Chapelle as well as the content of her relationship with Chandel.

Shari'ati leads us to believe that the love affair and reunion with Chapelle may be the symbolic expression of a process of self-discovery and transcendence for Chandel. A fusion between Chandel, who is claimed to be irreligious, and Chapelle, who is said to be very religious, could produce a superior synthesis.⁷¹ When Madame de la Chapelle, as she is sometimes called, astutely claims that she has observed and become aware of Chandel's failures amongst his successes, his solitude in the midst of his socializing and the pride hidden beneath his modesty, Shari'ati retorts, 'who are you, are you not I?'⁷² Is not Chapelle the 'other' self of Shari'ati, his complementary self, without which his identity crisis would never be resolved.

On one occasion, Shari'ati refers to Madame de la Chapelle as Chandel's wife.⁷³ Yet, hints at the fact that Chapelle and Chandel are not spouses abroad. After their reunion in Paris, the tone and manner in which Chapelle and Chandel woo one another, while speaking about their love casts some doubt on the identity of Chapelle as Chandel's wife. Chandel, for example, reminds Chapelle that here in Paris, 'Love is not a crime. It is sacred, it is a reflection of the divine spirit'.⁷⁴ Once in Chandel's room, Chapelle discovers the three books written by Chandel, either the three volumes of the grey notebook or the grey and the green notebooks along with the volume of 'Letters to Madame de la Chapelle' and calls them her beloved children.⁷⁵ A normal worldly marriage would produce children, while an emotional and sentimental happening would breed three romantic poetry books. Chapelle's recollection of the cautious and secretive manner in which she visited Chandel's room three and a half years ago also hints at an informal relationship.

Exhilarated with her presence in Chandel's room and under very different circumstances, Chapelle exclaims with joy that she may now address his room as 'our room'.⁷⁶ The fact, for example, that Shari'ati writes about his two characters being together for the first time during the night and the resulting excitement, anxiety and elation that they feel, strongly indicates that Chapelle is not Chandel's regular companion.⁷⁷

In an attempt to present the love affair between Chandel and Chapelle as a metaphysical and even divine attraction, Shari'ati distinguishes between two types of enchantment. One is metaphysical and spiritual while the other is material and instinctual. Relations of the first category are best exemplified by the mysterious attraction between Mowlana and Shams, Salman and Mohammad, St. Paul and Jesus. Shari'ati maintains that the feelings expressed for Rosas in the Green notebooks belong to this category of transcendental love.⁷⁸ Perhaps the reunion with Rosas de la Chapelle was a symbolic expression of a gnostic reunion with the Beloved. In the tradition of many Sufis, Shari'ati may have believed that Chapelle was the human form in which He (*u*) was revealing and manifesting Himself. Shari'ati talks about a love that has befallen him. One that 'is not known to people, since they know the love of God, women, gold, glory and the likes.' His love, Shari'ati explains is 'that of a beloved who is human, but alas, it is not!'⁷⁹ Shari'ati boldly declares that Rosas is this beloved. She is the one he had always waited for in vain. This anticipation will only come to an end, he says, after death.⁸⁰ In a different work, Shari'ati informs his readers that Chandel passed away on 28 February 1967 or some two and a half years before Chapelle's arrival at Orly.⁸¹ Was Chandel symbolically resurrected after having met Chapelle?

Having mingled reality with pure fantasy, a practice not expected of an Islamic militant, Shari'ati informs us that his whole story was a charade. In this fictive piece of writing Shari'ati's poetic inclinations prevail as he browses through the meandering rainbow of his mind. In a dramatic change of situation, mentioned only casually and in passing, Shari'ati indicates that Madame de la Chapelle 'is the fantasizing dream of Lacroix' and that for years, he has been anxiously waiting at home 'anticipating the arrival of flight 615 from Belgium'.⁸² This time, it is not clear whether, having revealed too much, Shari'ati is not intentionally misleading his inquisitive readers. However, once again he plays with the identity of his characters. Lacroix refers to the inhabitant of 15, rue Lacroix, who is Chandel in the story and Shari'ati in real life.

We are told that as long as Chandel was alive, the flight from Belgium never reached its destination, never delivered its precious passenger, whom Shari'ati compared to Samuel Becket's Godot. Shari'ati wants us to believe that in reality, the 'goddess from the East' never arrived to hear the amorous words of Chandel, and the love affair was never consummated. The charade is about an intense passion, the flames of which only blaze as long as separation and desire lives. Separation from an earthly love or He (*u*). The fact remains that Chandel's or Shari'ati's feelings are real and authentic even though the story with the specifications Shari'ati

attributes to it may never have existed, or would perhaps have existed only under different circumstances. The story seems more than an amusing intellectual exercise and Chapelle as a hologram could be a symbol representing at times a divine and at times a worldly love.

Shari'ati and Solange

The Chandel-Chapelle episode seems to be a recurrence of a similar type of relationship Shari'ati experienced some nine or ten years earlier in Paris. The earlier episode recounts a romantic story between Shari'ati and Solange Bodin. Chapelle may, therefore, well be a manifestation of Solange or a representation of what Solange had epitomized in the past. In the Chandel-Chapelle story, Shari'ati had hinted at their meeting in Paris before their separation and supposed reunion. In the course of their conversation in Chandel's room, Chapelle is invited to look out of the window and observe a small café called 'Chez Madame Canard' next to the Eiffel tower. Chandel adds that the café where, 'two seats are still awaiting us after nine years' is still run by the same 'kind, pleasant and talkative old lady who always managed it'.⁸³

The sense of continuity or repetition that Shari'ati wishes to impart in relation to these two stories is clear. In a passage where he refers to his beloved as Rosas Chapelle, he provides us with a subtle link between Solange Bodin and Chapelle. Describing Chapelle, he writes 'My beloved is so delicate and sensitive that she has not befouled herself by 'being', for if she had worn the robe of the living she would have ceased to be my beloved.'⁸⁴ When the Persian word for 'being' is transliterated into its Latin equivalent it becomes 'Bodin', which is exactly the way Shari'ati spells Solange's last name. In what sense is Chapelle (who we assume is Solange Bodin) 'not befouled herself by "being"'? In actual fact, a real person called Solange Bodin, drowned at the age of twenty-two, shortly after Shari'ati met her in Paris. Shari'ati's repeated flashbacks to events which occurred nine or ten years ago are references to the days before her death.

Going back some nine or ten years Shari'ati provides a patchy account of his relationship with Solange Bodin. Elements of this account are spread throughout his *Dialogues of Solitude*, *Descent in the Desert* and even in the fourth lesson of his academic lectures at Hosseiniyeh Ershad.⁸⁵ When he first arrived in Paris, Shari'ati – as we have seen – lodged in a small apartment on the second floor of a building on 15, Rue Gutenberg in the 15th district of Paris.⁸⁶ His landlord Mr Bodin lived with his wife and two children and his wife's sister, Solange.

The only seemingly non-fictive information that we have about Solange is based on a letter that Shari'ati wrote to his wife back in Iran in 1959.⁸⁷ Here he refers to his landlord and his family; but the only name he mentions is that of 'Mademoiselle Solange' who is twenty-two years old and 'very beautiful'. Shari'ati praises Solange for her strong moral convictions and adds that she had never been to a

dancing hall, did not know how to dance and had never left the house accompanied by a man. According to Shari'ati, she was very concerned with her purity, goodness and virtue. He refers to her as a hardworking, studious and exceptional young woman. Solange studied sociology at the University. Emphasizing the piety of the household, Shari'ati praised them as devout Catholics. In the same letter, he gives news of Solange's death, writing that he had received a letter from Solange's sister informing him that she had drowned.

Solange is portrayed by Shari'ati as an ideal type. From Shari'ati's dispersed comments we get the impression that she had a difficult life; nevertheless, she did everything in a pleasant and enjoyable manner.⁸⁸ She confronted Shari'ati's anger with her glittering, smiling eyes.⁸⁹ She was an intelligent intellectual who constantly read and thought, learning something new every day and thus having something new to say every day.⁹⁰ Solange had a 'philosophical, poetical and artistic spirit', which she expressed well in her writings.⁹¹ She disliked politics and tried hard to dissuade Shari'ati from pursuing his political interests. She was a devout Catholic, who under the instruction of the 'Richelieu Center', a Catholic organization, spent three nights a week reading class notes to an impoverished and blind Vietnamese student.⁹²

In reference to Solange, Shari'ati says 'her thoughts were those of a book I had written, her heart was a book of poetry, every poem in which, I had composed. She too knew me like the inside of her pocket.'⁹³ Solange was instrumental in revealing Shari'ati to himself. He recalls how Solange would observe him like a psychiatrist, watch every move he made, question every word he uttered and comment on every answer he gave. She would always analyse him and never praise nor pamper him.⁹⁴

Shari'ati says that she was a master at the 'art of affection'. Affection (*dust dashtan*) in Shari'ati's vocabulary is a feeling that transcends human love. It is an attraction that has been fertilized in another world and exists between two 'mysterious spirits'.⁹⁵ Shari'ati argues that whereas love is a tumultuous experience that vacillates with the proximity and distance between two individuals, affection is calm, steady and eternal. In short it is a mystical emotion similar to that of the Sufi for his Beloved. Shari'ati calls it a manifestation of God's spirit.⁹⁶ The reference to Solange's mastery at affection gives a mystical and gnostic aspect to her character. It could even imply that she is a symbol of a gnostic experience. Shari'ati's praise for Solange's purity, spirituality and virtue can also be construed as both worldly and spiritual. Her goodness, in Shari'ati's eyes, was such that it seems as if her creation was the living proof of God's existence.⁹⁷

Solange's name is sometimes spelt on the basis of a direct transliteration of her name into Persian. At other times, however, Shari'ati refers to her as *fereshteh-e tanha* or the 'solitary angel'.⁹⁸ Shari'ati, once again engages in his favourite game of associations – here the sound of Solange with the French words 'seul ange' or the solitary angel. This play on words opens another literary avenue to him. When he refers to the presence of the 'solitary angel' he could be referring to the person of

Solange, yet he could also be referring to the angel of solitude, in other words to himself.

The fact, however, that he gives her a last name is equally significant. Shari'ati refers to Solange as Solange Bodin, even though he tells us that she was the sister of Mr. Bodin's wife. Bodin transliterated into Persian could mean 'being'. Solange Bodin could therefore mean the 'solitary angel of being'. This provided an ideal association for Shari'ati who always considered himself a loner and at pains with his 'being' in this world. He considered 'being' as a state of imprisonment which prevented him from liberation and union with God. So even though Solange did actually exist, the image that Shari'ati created in her name could have been a manifestation of his gnostic self. Solange, like Rosas, could also have been the 'Sufi's flower'. To establish the fact that Rosas and Solange are one and the same, Shari'ati provides another important clue. Rosas is introduced as the author of 'The murmurs of a solitary angel'.⁹⁹ Rosas is presented as the author of Solange's life. Shari'ati tells us that Solange acts out Rosas' life.

In a poem written in French, Shari'ati refers to a 'stranger' to whom he declares his love in an 'afternoon' at a café called "Chez Mme Canard", where two chairs awaited them impatiently.¹⁰⁰ The person is described as one who could have been 'his sister, wife or even perhaps one of his parents', he says he does not know, but what is certain is that 'somewhere, sometime they had lived together as a couple'.¹⁰¹ The only two people with whom Shari'ati claimed to have been at 'Chez Mme Canard', were Solange and Rosas. The 'stranger', therefore could only be Rosas, Solange, or either, as they are both the same character. Shari'ati characterizes the words of love exchanged between them as 'beautiful, intoxicating, mysterious words that expressed nothing but the 'Sufi's flower', the 'gift' of God to a saint'.¹⁰² He tells us that this is an unearthly love, a love for absolute beauty and absolute good. This must, therefore, be a Sufi's love of God.

Shari'ati does not recount how he and Solange got to know one another, yet at some point we are informed of an intimate relationship between the two. She would call Shari'ati *shelakhteh*, messy, the only Persian word she knew.¹⁰³ The couple chatted, walked hand in hand and sat side by side watching the romantic sight of the sunset. Shari'ati recalls that even though his French was not very good at the time and it was not easy for him to articulate his thoughts, he spent hours conversing with Solange. She would correct his French and help him express his ideas, which she found bewildering.¹⁰⁴ Shari'ati gives a number of detailed references to the cosy café of 'Chez Mme Canard', its owner and his own interaction and dialogue there with Solange at the café, which was very close to where he and Solange lived. Shari'ati repeats the statement he made in relation to the 'stranger' and recalls that two seats at a small table outside on the terrace of the café, where they would sit and watch the sunset, were always reserved for them.¹⁰⁵

We are presented with a vivid picture of Mme Canard, whose name means duck in English. The owner of the café is described as a prim and proper, lively, talkative and jovial old woman who is very fond of Shari'ati and who, alluding to

Ali Baba and the forty thieves, called him 'Ali Baba'.¹⁰⁶ When she became serious, she called him '*cheri*'. Madame Canard also called him *charite*, which means charity, when she wanted to pronounce his full surname. She believed that the name suited Shari'ati's character.¹⁰⁷ Mme Canard, who had long white hair, a pleasant face and a generous character, waited on Shari'ati's table herself. Having become fond of 'them', she would cheer them up when they became silent and glum.¹⁰⁸

Even though the café Shari'ati referred to did in fact exist until 1992, its name was not 'Chez Mme Canard'.¹⁰⁹ Shari'ati's recollection that it was located on the corner of Gutenberg street is correct.¹¹⁰ To be exact, it was on the corner of Gutenberg and Sebastien Mercier in Paris' 15th district. It was actually called 'Chez Madame Lea', and was managed by a woman whose descriptions correspond to Shari'ati's description of Madame Canard. Madame Lea's full name was Lea Canan. Shari'ati's witty mind must have immediately associated the name Canan with canard. He must have also decided that Canard or duck was a much more suitable name for a homely and pleasant chatterbox. Once again, Shari'ati moulded the reality in to the truth he saw in that reality. What was important to him was not the form or the appearance but the significance of the café in his life.

Solange's Death and Resurrection

Having given us a short description of Solange, the environment in which they lived and their relationship, Shari'ati provides us with some information about her sudden and premature death. The date of her death is said to be 8 August 1958.¹¹¹ Shari'ati recounts how the sea, which he adored and believed to be 'sacred', had devoured Solange.¹¹² Shari'ati wailed, grieved and begged the sea to give her back. He would even swim the shores of the English Channel where she had drowned to plead his case with the sea directly. Yet the sea never responded.¹¹³ Chandel's metaphysical love affair with Chapelle is modelled on his fictive liaison with Solange. In actual life however, Shari'ati came to the Bodin's in June 1959 and Solange died in early August of the same year. It is clear that the two did not spend a great deal of time together, which supports the argument that even though Solange was real, her myth was of far greater significance.

Shari'ati laments that he was oblivious to Solange while she was alive and became properly conscious and desirous of her only after her death. Solange was the embodiment and expression of a message. Her 'silence, utterance, glance, smile, expression, mood, behaviour and demeanor' was a meaningful and eloquent statement in itself.¹¹⁴ The affection between Shari'ati the Muslim and Solange the devout Catholic, symbolized an understanding among true believers that transcended the common disagreement between people of different religions. Shari'ati's love for Solange was also an allegory of unity and fusion of religions when there existed the common cause of His love.

Before realizing the significance of Solange in his life, Shari'ati recounts that he

thought he had found his way out of the purgatory of unknowing by choosing reason and rationality which expressed the Western view of life.¹¹⁵ Solange, according to Shari'ati, was the miracle that opened his eyes to the spiritual aspect of life. Shari'ati considers the enlightening role of Solange after her death comparable to that of Shams in Mowlavi's life.¹¹⁶ He tells us that she was the same 'thunderbolt' that hit Mowlavi. Solange taught Shari'ati the extent to which, filled with the love of God, one could be affectionate and devoted. Shari'ati suggests that Massignon and Solange were both his idols since they both taught him that the human spirit can develop to the extent that it may fill the gap between the earth and the sky. In a way Shari'ati is introducing his two spiritual guides (*pir*) who provided him with the vision which enabled him to seek 'the unity of Being' (*vahdat-e vojüd*).

In his mystical journey to heaven, while Shari'ati looks into a clear and pure stream of water, he gradually sees an emerging image from the bottom of the stream which he seems to recognize. It is the image of the person whom Shari'ati had lost in the sea many years ago.¹¹⁷ One would expect it to be that of Solange. Yet Shari'ati explains how he observed 'the radiating smile on God's kind lips'.¹¹⁸ The link between God and Solange is clear. It is possible, therefore, to infer that Solange is a symbol or manifestation of God just as Rosas Chapelle was.

In Sufi literature, the sea is a symbol of eternal Truth and Love. Shari'ati uses it to express the same idea.¹¹⁹ Drowning in the sea is the symbol of rejoining God, a symbol of 'unity of Being'.¹²⁰ For years, Shari'ati is too grieved and distressed to realize that Solange's departure from this world and his loss was also synonymous with Solange's felicity resulting from her meeting with her Beloved. The pain and chagrin of her loss, which Shari'ati explains at great length, seems to result in his loss of faith. With great nostalgia, he remembers the death of Solange and admits that once he had great affection for someone [Solange] and La Manche [The English Channel] took her away.¹²¹ If Solange was considered as the source of his faith, her loss could imply its absence. This deep sense of confusion is characteristic of what Shari'ati calls his years of 'philosophical agnosticism'. Spiritual preoccupation with religion during this period in Paris gives way to a worldly enthrallment with politics. This could explain the fact that some nine or ten years later Solange is resurrected and returns from the sea. She is revived as Chapelle. Chandel's love story with Chapelle would therefore signify Shari'ati's revived gnostic faith in God.

Shari'ati identified his own fate with that of Dante. As he mourned the death of Solange he wrote, 'my Beatrice was engulfed by the sea and I have remained a Dante between "purgatory" and "hell"'.¹²² Beatrice is a reference to Beatrice Portinari, Dante's love and main character in 'The New Life' and 'Divine Comedy'. Beatrice, like Solange, dies young and unexpectedly and after her death Dante goes almost out of his mind. Shari'ati is certainly inspired by Dante's love for Beatrice. Like Dante, he wishes to transform his love for Solange into a literary, spiritual and philosophical treatise. In Shari'ati's mystical journey to heaven, it is again Beatrice that takes his hand and lifts him towards heaven, where she leaves

him and disappears.¹²³

There are two other interesting parallels, between the couples; Dante-Beatrice and Shari'ati-Solange. In the 'Divine Comedy' it is through Beatrice that Dante for a brief moment enjoys the supreme vision of God. Solange seems to fulfill the same purpose. She seems to be the medium through which Shari'ati expresses his gnostic love. Furthermore, it was after nine years that Dante met Beatrice for the second time. Shari'ati informs us that after nine years, the sea eventually gave back to him his disappeared love.¹²⁴ After his second reunion with his lost love, Shari'ati tells us that he would abandon politics to dedicate his entire life to (u) the Beloved.¹²⁵

Three Episodes of the Fictive Mind

In his life, Shari'ati made ample use of his fictive constructions at different periods and for different purposes. His fabrications were always instantaneous. They were so thoroughly conceived and so convincingly presented that they left no room for doubt. Shari'ati hatched appropriate ideas that he attributed to others whenever the occasion called for them. Where plagiarism is a disease that afflicts intellectuals of all nationalities, Shari'ati did the opposite. He added words of wisdom, poems and sayings to the names of others.

On one pleasant spring day, Shari'ati was chatting with a few of his students on the campus of the Faculty of Literature of Mashhad University. The subject gravitated towards poetry writing, imitation and creativity. In a sarcastic tone, Shari'ati remembered that he too had 'committed' (*mortakeb*) a poem.¹²⁶ Shari'ati was fond of employing the term 'commit' when he wanted to demonstrate that something was not supposed to have been done, but had to be or was done.¹²⁷ It implied some degree of wrong doing. He explained that in his high school final exam, there was a question on the life and works of Khaju-ye Kermani (the famous 13th-century poet) which asked for a poem by him. Shari'ati recollected that since he did not remember any poems by Kermani, on the basis of what he remembered of Kermani's style, he immediately 'committed' a poem. To make sure that the examiner would not doubt the 'authenticity' of the poem, he even fabricated a reference for it and cited a handwritten anthology of Kermani's poems in the private library of Mr Farrokh. Shari'ati had assumed that the examiners would not bother to check his reference. Apparently, one of the examiners became curious and had sought in vain to find the anthology in Farrokh's library. Later, Shari'ati was contacted and questioned about the exact reference of the poem. Shari'ati, who could not divulge his secret, had responded that he must have obviously seen the anthology elsewhere, but he did not recall where. Shari'ati had quipped that, 'I still do not remember where I had seen it!'

During their gatherings at the Peikar literary circle in 1956, Shafi'i Kadkani, recalled that Shari'ati always attacked classical poets, arguing that their poetry had

no perspective.¹²⁸ One day, while the two were debating the merits and shortcomings of the two types of poetry, each supporting his position with relevant poems, Shari'ati recited a verse which he attributed to Nima Yushij. The verse described the sea as 'tempestuous and silent'. Shari'ati argued that this type of perspective could not be found in classical poetry. Shafi'i Kadkani recollects that the imagery and the perspective that Shari'ati evoked that day in Nima's name was instrumental in converting him from a partisan of classical poetry to that of modern poetry. Years after this incident Shafi'i Kadkani, who had the verses recited by Shari'ati on that day engraved in his mind, searched in vain for those verses in Nima's anthology. The poem Shari'ati had conjured was the fruit of his own fictive mind.

During the imprisonment of seventeen members of Mashhad's branch of the National Resistance Movement in 1957, Taher Ahmadzadeh, recalls that his prison cell was right in front of Ali Shari'ati's and the two could communicate when guards were not passing through the corridor.¹²⁹ One of the issues on which Ahmadzadeh was being interrogated was a new year card that had been printed and circulated by the NRM and confiscated during the raid on their homes. Alluding to the shah's dark reign and greeting the end of it, the message in the card said, 'Now that winter with all the cruelty of its army is reaching its end and the liberating forces of spring are vanquishing the hostile forces of winter, we hope that the dark days of the colonized people will end.' Ahmadzadeh remembers asking Shari'ati to come up with an idea explaining away or justifying the radical political message of the card. Shari'ati had immediately replied that he remembered a poem by a 5th-century poet proving that the style of writing used in the card was common practice in Iranian literature and its content was actually very mild as compared to some other texts describing the advent of spring. Subsequently, Shari'ati recited a poem which he had probably concocted. It said, 'tomorrow when the Easterly wind (Saba) like Kaveh ushers in the spring, it will depose the bloodthirsty Zahak from his throne of cruelty and injustice.'¹³⁰ Ahmadzadeh recalls memorizing the verse. When asked about the meaning of the message in the card, he recited the verse Shari'ati had taught him and asked his interrogator to interpret it. The ruse seemed to have worked. Ahmadzadeh then presented the explanation Shari'ati had provided. It was clear that the message in the verse was far more explicit and its political imagery far more piercing than the message in Ahmadzadeh's card. No one but Shari'ati knows whether the exact verse was really that of a fifth century poet or a figment of his own imagination.

At Mashhad University

Shari'ati started work at Mashhad University in the Spring of 1966. At first he was assigned two courses. In the series of seven courses offered by the History Department on, 'The History of Iran after Islam', he started with the period, 'From Islam to the Gaznavids', course number 01080205. His second course was on 'History of Civilization', course number 01080419. Both these three-credit courses were departmental requirements for history majors. Shari'ati's first classes were composed of about forty students with an average age of around twenty-five; most were mature male high school teachers.¹ Shari'ati's classes soon became the centre of attention at the university. The subject, content, language and style of his lectures all made him popular among the students. Both in content and form his teaching presented a real break with the dry methods of the traditional academics. Shari'ati's amiable personal character, always willing to engage in a lengthy and uninhibited discussion, endeared him to the students. Furthermore, he did not shy away from addressing issues which were considered politically controversial. His subtle, yet well discerned, criticisms directed at the government added to his popularity. Word of his veiled attacks got around and ultimately reached SAVAK, which in turn complained about him to the University. Matini recalls that 'Shari'ati's problems with SAVAK was one of the department's headaches. Despite warnings about his political indiscretion by the University administration Shari'ati continued to use his classes for the propagation of his ideas.'²

The appearance of a Western-trained professor, using the language and jargon of Western philosophers and social scientists couched in an Islamic terminology, was a novelty. In his lectures, age-old religious concepts which were usually regarded as obscure, prosaic, stale and narrow-minded were imbued with a new identity and became attractive. Having eventually found the audience with whom he wished to discuss his ideas, he set out to achieve what he had already given considerable thought to. In class he had the opportunity to experiment with his newly-found interpretation of traditional Islam. His lectures provided a synthesis of what he had learnt and reflected on in Paris. They may even be construed as a response to the questions he asked himself there: 'where should we start from?' and 'what should we depend on?' The answers, he believed, would provide the proper means of conducting a successful political struggle in Iran. His modernist

philosophical and socio-political analysis of Islamic concepts and his rendition of key Islamic figures in the light of contemporary values and problems, demonstrated the power and scope of Islam. This, however, was Islam according to Ali Shari'ati.

As time passed Shari'ati's popularity increased. In an environment where students had to be forced into attending classes they would flock to Shari'ati's without an inkling of the course title or the topic he was to speak on. One of his students recalled that many just came to listen to Shari'ati – who would speak for up to three hours, often on a topic completely unrelated to the subject he was officially supposed to address. It was not the particular topic that was interesting but what Shari'ati improvised.³ By the autumn of 1968 one of his courses – the 'History of Philosophy and Art' – attracted over 250 students.⁴ Students, even from the Faculty of Sciences and Medicine, skipped their regular classes to listen to him speak at lecture hall number seven of the Faculty of Literature. Aside from the ideas that he conveyed, Shari'ati's personality and captivating oratory bewitched his audience. He spoke hurriedly in a 'Mashhadi' accent, never using notes or reading from texts. The form of his locution varied from formal to informal, yet it always had a poetical ring. 'During his lectures, you would be so carried away with his performance that you wouldn't even feel the chair you were sitting on,' recalled one student.⁵ When the bell rang, people remained seated as if they had not heard anything. It is said that the students and even the teachers of the next class would, after the bell, trickle in and, as if mesmerized by his speech, would stand there listening to him.

Shari'ati's entire lectures were taped, transcribed, duplicated and distributed by his students. One of them, a high-school teacher in Mashhad, recalled that he spent approximately one and a half months worth of his salary to buy a tape-recorder, just to hear Shari'ati's lectures repeatedly and to prepare for his exams.⁶ Others voluntarily spent a considerable amount of time typing, proof-reading, editing and preparing his work for publication. Students took on the every-day responsibility for the publication of both *Eslamshenasi* and *Kavir*.

Shari'ati gradually became a source of inspiration for a large number of young people who were proud of their Islamic culture yet found it incapable of providing tangible solutions to prevailing socio-economic and political problems. He even appealed to a large number of those middle and upper-middle class students whose behaviour and outlook before coming into contact with Shari'ati was far from Islamic. Even students of a different political persuasion respected him. They would come together, listen to, discuss and criticize his taped lectures, preparing their counter-arguments for Shari'ati's next lecture.⁷ Many apolitical first year students gradually found themselves fascinated by Shari'ati's penetrating discourse and personality.

Unlike most professors, who were aloof and somber both inside and outside the class, Shari'ati never shunned or snubbed his students. His style was to challenge students to reflect and gradually lure them into discussion. One such student

recalls that, one day in class, Shari'ati initially agreed with all his comments then, to his surprise, rejected his entire argument while presenting his own. After class, he calmly explained that, 'I agreed at first so that you would pursue your argument unintimidated'.⁸ Shari'ati was one of the very few teachers who never left a question unanswered and never interrupted students in the middle of their statement. As a result, he was always surrounded by his students as he walked out of his classes.⁹ Despite his popularity, Shari'ati was oblivious to the attention that was focused on him. He kept his followers at a certain distance and was not interested in building a circle of disciples (*morid*) around himself. In the words of one of his students, his 'passive charisma' and 'incredible innocence' added to his fame.¹⁰ According to another Shari'ati sought, through his social and professional behaviour, to set new standards, relax the strict and stifling environment and shatter prevailing dogmas at the University.¹¹

Shari'ati had his moods as well. Sometimes he was inaccessible and remote. In his introverted moods he did not feel like seeing, let alone talking to anyone. During the academic year of 1968/69, a student recalls that he, along with another classmate went to ask him a question in his office on the third floor of the Faculty of Literature's building. Shari'ati, who was deep in thought, had refused to accept them explaining that he had no time. The incident left a negative impression on the two youngsters who had been very fond of him.¹²

Shari'ati's company was very much sought by his students. He and a handful of other young teachers were invited by their male students to lunch on Fridays, when classes were closed. The students who hosted the lunch or were invited were not necessarily Shari'ati's disciples. What they had in common was their intellectual curiosity and their interest in learning more through informal interaction with their teachers. On such occasions, conversation revolved around general and current topics of interest to the students. It was, therefore, natural that philosophical and political issues regularly cropped up and candid and direct questions which could not be safely raised in class were posed. Reza Qanadan, professor of English literature at Mashhad University, recalls that during one of these Friday lunches, the students discussed the huge crowd at Heathrow airport welcoming the 'Beatles' back from one of their tours.¹³ Shari'ati viewed this type of fascination as a substitute for 'worship', which in his opinion was a 'natural' need. He had argued that since Westerners had lost their relationship with God, these youngsters were merely substituting 'reality' for the 'truth'. Bahman Ajang and his friends, who were Marxists, challenged the idea that worship was a natural need.¹⁴ Debate and discussion over the issue lasted well into the evening. According to Qanadan, even though Shari'ati was never subdued in such debates, his engagement in them allowed the students to measure the strength of their arguments against those of their professors and provided an important lesson in tolerance of different opinions.

Shari'ati was an incorrigible and impenitent rebel whose acts consistently defied the system. It would be difficult to determine whether his behaviour was

calculated or simply the outcome of his nature. Shari'ati was the greatest conceivable nightmare of a smooth-operating well-disciplined hierarchical organization. In the words of Jalal Matini, 'the University had more than a few problems with Shari'ati'.¹⁵ He constantly sought to challenge and undermine what he believed to be the rigid and status-oriented customs and practices that shaped life in the University, including the faculty-student relationships. He avoided, as much as he could, what was conventionally expected of him as a typical professor. He neither did what other professors did, nor expected from his students what other professors expected.

In Shari'ati's classes students felt as if their stifled sense of inquiry, curiosity and initiative was liberated. Even though Shari'ati was a master at ridiculing his detractors, in class he encouraged dialogue, listened to counter arguments and enjoyed lengthy discussions without entering into polemics.¹⁶ Some of his most vocal critics later became actively involved with the Marxist guerilla organization of the Peoples' Fada'i'an and lost their lives in street battles. Shari'ati never used abusive language or lashed out against even the most offensive of his students. His defence mechanism was the ironic smile that covered his face as students verbally attacked him in class, a smile which, for the students, was 'worse than a hundred insults'.¹⁷ Shari'ati's tolerance and patience with opposing ideas, even when they were put aggressively, impressed his students.¹⁸

In his typically eccentric style, Shari'ati was seldom present at the university during his 'statutory' office hours.¹⁹ In an official letter providing a detailed hourly and daily record of his presence at the University during November of 1970, Matini reproached Shari'ati for his excessive absences and threatened him with disciplinary action.²⁰ At the time, it was rumoured among the students that Matini kept a close watch on Shari'ati through Mahwash 'N', a faculty member of the History department who shared his office. Shari'ati may well have been a poor time keeper – he was often late for his classes – but he kept his students long after his classes were scheduled to end and seldom left the University at the end of the official working day.²¹ According to one of his students Shari'ati's effective contact hours in class were twice the officially determined hours.²² Outside his classes, Shari'ati spent long hours debating with his students. When his classes, especially during the short winter days, extended well beyond the scheduled time, Mr Shar'i, the janitor, shyly poked his head into Shari'ati's class and asked in his sweet Mashhadi accent, 'Doctor won't you go now?' Shari'ati would then curtly conclude with a parody or a poem, pick up his heavy overcoat and leave.²³ Another unusual aspect of Shari'ati's behaviour which caused some uneasiness among his colleagues was that, being a chain-smoker, he even smoked his Zar cigarettes in class.

At one point Matini sent Shari'ati a register with the names of all his students in it. He was asked to take attendance regularly and was reminded of the importance of the exercise.²⁴ Shari'ati, however, refused to comply, thus breaking a university rule. Matini recalls that one day Shari'ati had entered his class, thrown his register on the podium and declared that; 'we will not take attendance'.²⁵ At

first sight, Shari'ati's act seems to have been the reaction of a pedagogue who believed that students should not be coerced into attendance; if teachers could make the class attractive enough they would flood in, as was the case with his own lectures. A more subtle and revealing explanation by Qanadan, throws light on the dire political consequences that taking attendance would have implied for student activists at Mashhad University.²⁶ According to Qanadan, the registers were imposed by SAVAK in order to keep an eye on politically active students. If conscientiously used, the register might have provided SAVAK with proof of students' intransigence or 'other' activities at a time when they should have attended class. Qanadan explains that during the 1970s SAVAK often checked class registers to verify whether a particular student had been in class or not at a time when he or she was alleged to have been engaged in political activity. These facts throw a different light on Shari'ati's refusal to take class attendance.

Shari'ati's disrespect for the official course syllabus was another source of dissatisfaction among his peers and the administrators in the History department. A year after Shari'ati started teaching, Zaryab-e Kho'i paid a visit to Mashhad and met with Hossein-ali Moa'yeri, head of the History department. Moa'yeri referred to Shari'ati as 'this man that you employed' and complained that he kept saying; 'I don't teach history but sociology'. Zaryab-e Kho'i also recalls that Matini had the same complaint.²⁷ Shari'ati was reproached for transforming the course entitled 'The History of Iran from Islam to the Gaznavids', into a course on Islamology.²⁸ Even though he was not concerned with particular historical events, his lectures were not totally alien to the course syllabus. Instead of covering every topic in the syllabus, he considered it methodologically sound to provide an overall historical account and to establish a firm understanding of the pillars and foundations of the topic. This is not to say that he did not emphasize what he felt was important for the training of an authentic Islamic intellectual. Shari'ati argued that learning about Iranian history after Islam necessitated an understanding of Islam since it constituted 'the spirit of Iranian history' in its Islamic period.²⁹ Shari'ati believed that students had to understand the ideological clash between Islam on the one hand and Christianity, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism and Mazdakism which already existed in Iran, on the other. To understand Islamic thought, he believed that one had to learn about its intellectual representative, the Prophet Mohammad.³⁰ Such a chain of reasoning could often change the subject of a course. The University authorities rebuked him more than once for his 'irregular' teaching practices.³¹ Ironically, in the anti-establishment mood that prevailed in Iranian universities, whoever challenged the administration automatically became an idol of the students. A mere rumour that Shari'ati had been reprimanded by the University for his 'unprofessional' behaviour was enough to increase his popularity.

Shari'ati's absent mindedness added to his problems. Sometimes he was late for his exams and on at least one occasion he completely forgot to show up, leaving his students waiting for him. On one occasion, after a thirty minute delay, a group of students went looking for him on the campus and found him in his car,

deep in thought. Realizing his mistake, the absent minded professor walked into the huge auditorium, borrowed his book *Eslamshenasi* from the waiting students, wrote a couple of questions on the board and said; 'you can consult the book, talk, go and get a cup of tea or smoke if you wish'.³² From the point of view of the administration and some of his colleagues, Shari'ati's behaviour was not only careless, unprofessional and irresponsible, but an affront to the reputation of the university. According to one of Shari'ati's students, Jalal Matini, a disciplined and meticulous head of department was upset when Shari'ati missed one of his exams, but never reproached him publicly.³³

Even Shari'ati's exams were a subject of controversy at Mashhad University. He believed that if students were trusted, they would reciprocate. Consequently, he often gave his exam questions and walked out. Shari'ati also believed in open-book exams. But his exam questions were such that consulting books was, in fact, not at all helpful. Even though his exams were officially for two hours, Shari'ati did not impose any time limits. One of the four questions in one of his exams, probably in 'The History of Civilization', was 'The day I came, now that I am going'.³⁴ Shari'ati's students had different opinions on what he expected on in his exams. One of his students, who had failed his course, 'The History of Islam', recalled that Shari'ati preferred to see a reflection of his own ideas in the students' responses.³⁵ Another maintained that Shari'ati did not believe in exams, while according to another, an answer containing a complete regurgitation of Shari'ati's ideas would have certainly earned a failing grade.³⁶ Some considered him as one of those few teachers who was not concerned with grades while others remember him as a tough grader. According to one of his students, Shari'ati was stingy with the grade 'A' and earning a 'B' from him was quite an honour. The same student recalled that Shari'ati failed a good number of his students, who given the confrontationist mood that prevailed at the time, surprisingly never objected.³⁷ The general feeling among his students, however, was that Shari'ati disapproved of students who failed to apply independent thought and analysis; 'he who disagrees with me on the basis of his own reflection is more worthy than he who agrees with me without having reflected'.³⁸ However, like most professors the thought of correcting exams distressed and pained him.³⁹

Shari'ati sulked and complained about being humiliated by the university authorities. He felt under pressure from his peers whom he thought were jealous of his success⁴⁰ and even thought of leaving Mashhad University. Yet dedicated to his mission of creating a reformed Islamic socio-political consciousness in his students, he stayed on. This is what he understood by education. He could not cut himself from his source of real livelihood, his classes which he called his 'small yet grand world'.⁴¹ With his popularity snowballing beyond Mashhad, he was invited by other universities to deliver lectures. As a roving preacher-cum-teacher he accepted every opportunity.

The Jacobins

Mashhad University, like any other academic institution in the world, had its internal politics. The old guard, accustomed to their ways, tried to maintain their hard-earned status and seniority against the upcoming young teachers who found fault with every thing that existed, sometimes seeking to reinvent the wheel. Some six months after Shari'ati was employed, Cyrus Sahami, a French-educated geographer, began work at the university. Soon a core of young teachers without the rights and privileges of the old full professors was formed.⁴² The first issue that brought them together was their objection to an amendment to article six of the university's by-laws. According to this amendment, the Faculty Council was composed of only the full professors. On the days when the Council met, the main meeting – in which the six senior professors who qualified as its members participated and made the decisions – was scheduled for two in the afternoon. At three in the afternoon the remaining 'second class' professors were invited to hear their decisions.

The junior faculty wrote to Raja'i, their dean at the time, pointing out the inequity of the amendment, objecting to the prevailing system as a 'feudal tradition' and asking for its review. Demanding legal representation, they threatened that until steps were taken to redress the situation, they would not attend Faculty Council meetings in which they had no say. The letter was written by Sahami and signed by Shari'ati, Bayat-Mokhtari, Baradaran-e Rafi'i, Sadr-e Nabavi, Nik-Gohar, Zomorodian and Yaqmai'i. In his graceful manner, Raja'i wrote back making no promises and asking them for their indulgence, advising them that the senior professors were their elder brothers and that such an act was unworthy of them. It is said that Raja'i, himself a sympathizer of the National Front, supported Shari'ati and identified with his political stance. The group decided to respond to Raja'i's letter and the task was delegated to Shari'ati. He pointed out that their objection to the law was by no means a personal attack on those who benefited from it. Shari'ati argued that under the new circumstances, where the junior faculty outnumbered the senior faculty, the law had become inappropriate and unjust and had to be changed. He therefore called once more for the annulment of the amendment. Confronted with the intransigence of the senior faculty and the head of the Faculty of Literature, the signatories decided to boycott Council meetings.

The hardened position of the junior faculty after the second letter came to be construed as an anti-establishment political act. Although the signatories were not willing to compromise, Raja'i did not take any disciplinary action against them. In jest, he started to call them 'the Jacobins', a name they appreciated. Among the Jacobins, Shari'ati was very close to Sahami and the two men were also friendly with Bayat-Mokhtari and Nik-Gohar. After the protest, relationships between the junior and senior groups within the Faculty became strained, with only Raja'i's mediating role keeping communications open. In 1969, Raja'i was replaced by Matini, with whom the Jacobins had a rather distant relationship.

When the news of Raja'i's departure became public, the students of his Faculty organized a farewell reception for him. In lecture hall number seven on the third floor of the Faculty's old building, they gathered to pay their respect to a man whom they admired and were fond of. To show their appreciation they had brought him books which covered the table in front of the classroom. Raja'i is said to have quipped; 'Unfortunately I will not live long enough to read all these books.'⁴³ After statements by a few students and several minutes of applause Raja'i, whose voice trembled with emotion, addressed the gathering thanking everyone for their kindness and concern. He ended with a moving poem. By this time, the students' numbers had swollen to the extent that newcomers were forced to stand in the hallway and even down the stairways.

After Raja'i's address, the sound of applause reverberated up from the first floor of the building as Shari'ati, late as usual struggled to get up the stairs to deliver his farewell address.⁴⁴ Shari'ati started his speech by presenting a definition of the word *ta'asob* or tenacity of belief. He argued that the word came from the Arabic term *'asbah* and referred to a group of people to whom an individual considered himself affiliated or dependent on, such as a nation, a religious community, a party, a family or a class. Shari'ati argued that, contrary to the largely negative perceptions of the concept, it in reality reflected a sense of faith in, loyalty to and solidarity with the group with which a person was associated. Shari'ati argued that tenacity of belief was one of the distinguishing virtues of human beings.⁴⁵ In conclusion, he thanked the students who had come to the ceremony for their display of loyalty and solidarity. In his usual manner of redefining things and turning old concepts on their heads, Shari'ati praised them for their *ta'asob* or tenacity of belief. Even though, as everyone expected, Shari'ati did not refer to Raja'i directly, the students came out of that meeting with the impression that by praising them for their show of loyalty and affection to Raja'i, Shari'ati was clearly demonstrating his own deeply-felt devotion to his previous superior.⁴⁶

It was customary for members of the faculty to pay a courtesy visit to a newly appointed Head of the Faculty and congratulate him on his new position. Immediately after Matini's appointment, the Jacobins resisted calling on him. Some of their members argued that their intransigence would further complicate their relationship with the new appointee. It was finally decided that they would all meet with him in his study and not at the office of the Head of the Faculty. Eventually, Shari'ati and the rest of the group met with Matini. They sat in silence while Matini tried to break the heavy atmosphere with pleasantries. Feeling obliged to justify his unusual quietness, Shari'ati said; 'I have a toothache which does not permit me to speak much'. Only partially fulfilling their obligation, the Jacobins left Matini's study without congratulating him – and made fun of Shari'ati's obtuse excuse.⁴⁷

The fact that most of the members of the Jacobin group were popular with the students added to the tension between them and the senior faculty. In a highly controversial incident it was alleged that Dr 'M' had slapped a student in class. Dr 'M', a historian and a senior faculty member, was neither respected nor very popular.

It is not clear whether in fact 'M' had actually struck the student – at least one student in that class recalls that she did not see 'M' actually strike the student. Nevertheless, the Marxist students, disgruntled with 'M', capitalized on the alleged incident and called for his expulsion. To assure the prompt attention of the university officials to their demand, the students went on strike. In the meantime, Shari'ati, Sahami and Sadr-e Nabavi, were chosen as mediators. Even though relations between Shari'ati and 'M' were always tense, Shari'ati was adamantly against even the discussion of 'M's' dismissal. He argued that professors should not become accomplice to the expulsion of their peers, thereby setting an extremely dangerous precedent. Although the strike continued for a while, soon the allegedly offended student and 'M' reconciled and the situation calmed down.

The Medium

Shari'ati's less than orthodox reputation was not only limited to his absent-minded behaviour or his dislike of university rules and regulations. Soon word got out that Shari'ati was a psychic involved with occult practices. After his return from Paris and especially between 1967 and 1968 Shari'ati travelled regularly to Sabzevar and Mazinan, where spiritualism is said to have been a common practice. There, he participated in seances.⁴⁸ In Mashhad too, Shari'ati also participated in seances held at his friends' homes, where psychics from Sabzevar contacted spirits. He even took his colleagues Sahami and Baradaran-e Rafi'i to at least one of these sessions.

One Friday, early in the winter of 1970, the students invited a few of their favourite teachers to lunch at the newly inaugurated dormitory of Mashhad University.⁴⁹ Shari'ati, Sahami, Bayat-Mokhtari and Baradaran-e Rafi'i were among the guests. Everyone arrived on time except Shari'ati who was more than an hour late. Entering the room with puffy eyes and an exhausted look he explained that he had been writing something since the previous night and had not slept at all. In spite of his fatigue, he regained his spirits quickly and soon became the center of attraction. Having eaten their *polo-morg* (rice with chicken), the topic of conversation moved on to the separation of the spirit from the body after death. The students talked about a well-known pious man in Mashhad called Dadsetan who was reputed to be in touch with spirits. Na'imi, one of Shari'ati's students asked his opinion about spiritualism. Excited about the conversation, Shari'ati acknowledged that he knew people in Sabzevar who could summon spirits and that he also had the ability to do so. When asked by his students to perform for them, Shari'ati willingly accepted. The group moved upstairs, where Shari'ati placed a small round table in the middle of five or six of his interested and skeptical students. He placed his hands on the table, closed his eyes and repeated, 'please respond'. After a few seconds the table is said to have trembled and then gradually levitated – by at least ten centimeters – and remained suspended in the air while

Shari'ati was talking to the spirit. When his conversation with the spirit was over the table gradually descended. Reflecting on the episode that he had witnessed, a student wrote: 'What he [Shari'ati] did could have neither been magic nor a miracle. I am incapable of naming or providing a scientific justification for what I saw and what I felt with my hands'.⁵⁰ The next day word about Shari'ati's supernatural powers spread amongst the students. Most of them felt that such acts did not befit a professor.

Some accounts relate that Shari'ati was a gifted medium; but others recall the failure of his attempts at calling on spirits. One of Shari'ati's old friends had heard about his spiritualism and was curious about the phenomenon so he invited him to his house for a demonstration. Again two people, one of whom was Shari'ati, placed their hands on a small table. Shari'ati called on Sheikh Hebatollah, a supposed psychic who had a reputation for being unbalanced, to summon the spirits. To the disappointment of his friends, as much as Shari'ati tried, the spirits did not respond and the table did not budge.⁵¹

In his own writings, Shari'ati acknowledged his belief in spirits and explained how difficult it was to prove it to those who only believed in what they could see, count or weigh.⁵² Shari'ati believed that God had provided him with a support spirit which summoned the spirits that he wanted to communicate with. This indispensable gift, he believed, was given to him because of his 'faith, piety, honesty, trials and midnight prayers'.⁵³ Shari'ati spoke of the 'land of spirits', to which he claimed to have travelled and of which he had intimate knowledge.⁵⁴ In a lengthy account, he explained how he spoke with, spent time with, lived with and even shared experiences with the spirits.⁵⁵

In his *Dialogues of Solitude* Shari'ati wrote about an experience during which a spirit signalled its desire to speak to him by rattling the legs of a table so hard that it nearly broke.⁵⁶ Elsewhere, he referred to a seance during which he had called upon Sa'di's spirit and inquired about his best poem, to which Sa'di is said to have given an answer.⁵⁷ In his gnostic and mystical writings, Shari'ati often referred to the spirit or spirits that incarnated his own body and that of others.⁵⁸

Talk about Shari'ati's ability to call up spirits and levitate objects and his inexplicable if not supernatural attributes could have added to his popularity among his disciples, but it did not. It could have added to his aura of mystery and enigma and been considered as a thaumaturgic gift (*karamat*), usually an attribute of gnostic saints. It backfired, however, particularly among students who found the whole matter superstitious, incredible and dubious. Shari'ati's opponents used his spiritual episodes as further proof of his unscientific, superstitious and reactionary disposition. It is said that an article entitled 'call up bread' written by Mohaddess appeared in the literary review *Hirmand* ridiculing Shari'ati and the rumors about him.⁵⁹ Once word about Shari'ati's involvement with spiritualism reached his father, Mohammad-Taqi immediately ordered his son to put an end to such activities and threatened to condemn him publicly, if he continued.⁶⁰ Nevertheless there were those for whom Shari'ati's power to levitate objects was an 'unbelievable re-

ality' which contradicted 'the logic of all they had learnt' and seemed like an 'honest and transparent wizardry from which its magician did not wish to gain anything.'⁶¹

A Patron of Cultural Activities

At the University of Mashhad, like other Iranian universities, secular students had a complete monopoly over dramatic arts. Traditionally, religion and the arts were irreconcilable. Numerous Shi'i Islamic jurists had ruled against viewing, let alone participating in the performing arts. It was, therefore, rather curious for secular students to find Shari'ati, identified as religious, attending a performance of one of Bertolt Brecht's plays. Impressed by the performance of an actor, who played the role of a Nazi officer, Shari'ati sought the young man at the end of the play, and warmly congratulated him.

All those who had attended Shari'ati's classes had become exposed to Abu Zarr and many were fascinated by this character. Endowing a relatively obscure religious character, with whose name many students, even with a religious background, were unfamiliar, with all the values of a twentieth century revolutionary, Shari'ati created a wave of 'Abu Zarr mania'. Many read their professor's translated book on Abu Zarr and discovered in Shari'ati's free rendering of the original that here was a veritable champion of the oppressed who they could all be proud of. The revolutionary romanticism, steadfastness and rebelliousness of Shari'ati's Abu Zarr made him the closest thing to a native Che Guevara.

Reza Daneshvar, a student of literature at the University of Mashhad was greatly influenced by Shari'ati's translation. During the academic year 1970/71, he started writing a play on the basis of the book. Iraj Saghiri, the young man, whom Shari'ati had congratulated for his role as a Nazi officer became interested in collaborating with Daneshvar. For the two young men, who wanted to demonstrate their opposition to the status quo and somehow assist in promoting the anti-shah struggle, staging a play about a champion of the oppressed was an ideal project. Yet to write a play on a religious character in a milieu controlled by secular intellectuals was to risk their mockery. Daneshvar, however, recalled that he was intent on employing religion for cultural purposes.⁶²

Once the play was written, Daneshvar approached Daryush Arjomand, whom he had known from his high school years in 1965, and suggested that they should work together on the script and prepare it for eventual staging. Daneshvar recalls that he gave the script to Arjomand, who was older and had already some previous experience in directing plays. Arjomand, who was an admirer of Shari'ati passed the script onto him and asked for his opinion and help. Shari'ati was thrilled and threw his moral support behind the project. According to Daneshvar, Shari'ati's enthusiasm and zeal was the real reason why Arjomand became so involved with the play. Soon a makeshift theatrical company made up of University of Mashhad

students was created. The fact that all those concerned with this religio-political play, except Shari'ati, were essentially non-religious individuals at the time added to the aura of their work.

The play had one key role – that of Abu Zarr. The supporting cast had only minor parts. Daneshvar cast Saghiri, who was stout and rather short, as Abu Zar. Shari'ati, who envisaged Abu Zarr as a tall thin person, was not too happy with the choice. He worried that Saghiri's appearance would adversely affect the portrayal of his hero; but faced with Daneshvar's insistence, he reluctantly conceded. For his part, Saghiri went on a rigid diet and exercised daily to lose weight.⁶³ As rehearsals got under way, the players became more involved and anxious about the play's success. Attending as many rehearsals as he could, Shari'ati gave them all the moral support he could. Discussions around the play created a collegial atmosphere.

After some three months of preparation, the play, 'Once again Abu Zarr' opened on a chilly February night in 1971. The aisles and the back of the Razi auditorium of the Faculty of Medicine seating 700 people were packed. Before the play started, Shari'ati came on stage and delivered a short lecture about Abu Zarr's personality which he repeated before each subsequent performance. On the opening night, Shari'ati was just as nervous as Daneshvar, Arjomand and Saghiri. He sat in the front row and chain-smoked, his hands trembling.⁶⁴ Earlier in the day he had told the cast that the show could not be mediocre and had added, 'it will either turn out to be a fiasco or a smashing hit'.⁶⁵ The one-act play lasting ninety minutes finished with an interminable round of applause. It was an immediate success.

Back in the changing room, Shari'ati paid a visit to the cast. The atmosphere was tense and full of mixed emotions; joy, pride, achievement, artistic, political and personal success. Shari'ati sought out Saghiri, who was on the verge of fainting after his intense performance. He put his arms around him, sobbed and said in a trembling voice, 'I swear that if I were to die right now I would have no unfulfilled wishes, for you have realized them for me'.⁶⁶

Word about the play got out and it became an instant subject of discussion in Mashhad. At first only a few nights of performance, primarily for students was envisaged. Faced with the unexpected enthusiastic reception, performances were extended to ten nights, attracting audiences from outside the university. After each performance, people gathered in small groups in front of the Faculty of Medicine's main building and on the sidewalks of the Daneshgah street discussing the play well into the night. Abu Zarr, the symbol of resistance to despotism and social injustice became a favourite topic of discussion amongst the young. Shari'ati who was present during each performance, came half an hour before the play started and stayed behind with the cast and the technicians until everything was put in order and arranged before they left the auditorium.

The play, however, created some commotion among the clergy. Abu Zarr was a man of God and his struggle was in the name of God and Islam. Daneshvar's Abu Zar, however, in harmony with the hero's myth, was not a sheepish character but a religious maverick capable of raging against the Almighty. Certain clerical circles

were shocked at Abu Zarr's comportment in the play and some were uneasy with staging the life of one of the Prophet's closest companions. Two specific parts of the play provoked their condemnation. First, Abu Zarr's statement that, 'nothing belongs to God and everything is the property of his subjects' raised the violent objection of a man who tried to throw himself from the balcony in protest. Second, Abu Zarr's slashing of a rope that hung from the ceiling symbolizing his connection with and faith in God, created an uproar. This momentary rebellious act of rupture was viewed as apostasy. During one of the last performances, it triggered the remonstrance of a few people in the audience who were quickly silenced by the rest.

The play, however, became an important point of reference for all those who were involved with it. It was not only a successful cultural experience, but a meaningful, spontaneous and collective activity carried out with enthusiasm and zeal. It also engendered strong personal and cultural ties between those who had participated in it and Shari'ati. Many who came to feel close to Shari'ati had no strong religious inclinations. They had come to respect the man for his energy, commitment and concern in promoting cultural activities that appealed to the students, fulfilled their curiosity and promoted their sense of creativity. Less than two years later, Shari'ati arranged for the performance of Abu Zarr at Hosseiniyeh Ershad. In Tehran, the play proved to be just as popular.

Cultural activities, in different forms, were an important medium through which politicized students organized, developed and disseminated their ideas. At the initiative of religiously-oriented students, the Faculty of Literature organized a book-club.⁶⁷ This was an informal association with no legal status at the University. The book club, through an agreement with various publishers sold books to its members at a discount and founded a small library of some 3000 volumes. Membership was free and the club accepted donations in cash or books. The book club, located above the cafeteria, soon became a popular hang-out for students. Shari'ati was among those who regularly frequented it. He usually browsed through the books and bought a few. On the day that he discovered his newly published book, *Kavir* in the display case he could barely hide his pleasure and satisfaction. Initially the book club also tried its hand at publishing. It brought out a publication called 'That Day and this Day' (*An Zaman va in Zaman*). The students requested Shari'ati to contribute and he willingly obliged. After the first issue, which included poetry, prose and Shari'ati's article on *haj* the publication was banned.

The book club was officially inaugurated on 14 December 1969 in the presence of Faryar, the president of the university and a supporter of the venture. Shari'ati was invited as the keynote speaker. In his speech he addressed three major issues, all of which were of great concern to Iranian students. He emphasized the idea that Iranians did not need to ape Westerners since they possessed rich sources of philosophical and intellectual wealth. Seeking an identity in one's historical heritage, he maintained, did not mean that one would have to become, 'reactionary,

superstitious or racist'.⁶⁸ He underlined the notion that human beings were instrumental in shaping their own social existence, concurring with Sartre and the existentialists that Man was responsible for his position and condition in life.⁶⁹ This was a reminder to his audience that they could and should change what they found unacceptable and intolerable. Finally, arguing that rebelliousness was the only common 'doctrine or religion' of sophisticated youth and modern intellectuals, Shari'ati made a virtue out of rebellion.⁷⁰ Proclaiming that the 20th century was the age of 'protest for the sake of protest', Shari'ati invited his audience to engage in independent thought and to rebel.⁷¹ Shari'ati's speech went down well, ending in a long round of applause. His growing popularity with the student body was rooted in the fact that he was their friend, their psychoanalyst as well as their teacher of righteousness.

The Relief Worker

On 1 September 1968, a massive earthquake struck eastern and southern Khorasan, destroying over 500 villages and killing many thousands of people from Gonabad to Qa'en and Birjand. The Faculty of Literature dispatched a group composed of Sahami, Nik-Gohar and Zomorodian to the area to report on the situation. Shari'ati, who was invited by the students to participate in the relief operation, readily accepted.⁷² He accompanied a group to the disaster areas. The object of the visit was to observe the degree of destruction, assess the needs of the people in the region, estimate the quality and quantity of relief assistance for the victims and finally prepare a report on the damage and what could be done about it. In Shari'ati's own words, the group was equipped with no more than ball-point pens and paper.⁷³ Shari'ati provides a vivid picture of the group's impotence faced with the scale and horror of the disaster. The absence of relief and the agony of the people compelled them to join the villagers in digging the rubble and searching for the dead and wounded with their bare hands.⁷⁴ Shari'ati recounts how they were all put to shame by an old man who, in the midst of the calamity, stopped the search at the risk of not rescuing members of his family and returned their kindness by fetching them a melon so that they could rest for a while.⁷⁵

On their return to Mashhad, Shari'ati and Sahami set out to organize a relief programme. Through their dean, Raja'i, they succeeded in obtaining the official aid of the university. Sahami was to distribute aid from a base at Grimonch in the disaster area and Shari'ati took charge of collecting and sending aid from Mashhad.⁷⁶ Since the autumn semester of 1968 had not yet started, the Faculty of Literature building was used as the relief headquarters. The students committed themselves on a voluntary basis to the project and Shari'ati's presence secured a flow of aid in cash and kind from the bazaar.⁷⁷ In his public speeches, Shari'ati's reconstruction of what he had witnessed at the earthquake sites greatly moved his audience and boosted fund raising for the relief operation.⁷⁸

Other than the relevant government organizations and a group of clergy from Mashhad, who operated in the Ferdows area, this was the only active relief organization in the disaster areas. Relief camps were set up in a number of key villages from which teams of students distributed necessary materials to smaller villages in the vicinity. Food, blankets, clothing, shoes and construction material were either provided by the bazaar, collected from individuals, or purchased by the relief headquarters from public donations. An account in Shari'ati's name was opened and money destined for earthquake victims was deposited in it. Although he avoided all financial and money matters, even in his own household, Shari'ati fully committed himself to running the relief operation. There were rumours that the relief headquarters was spending more money on desperately needed material than they had; but Shari'ati was certain that his own credibility and popularity would attract the necessary funds.

Haqshenas, who had been sent by a group of philanthropic bazaaris to identify the the most afflicted villages, recalled that on his arrival, he was informed that two separate relief camps were in operation. One was Shari'ati's, the other was funded and supported by the influential Ayatollah Milani.⁷⁹ Haqshenas and his group were advised to work through Shari'ati's headquarters. Tired and worn out, Shari'ati worked around the clock keeping up the spirit of his collaborators by reciting the work of his favourite contemporary poet, Akhavan Sales.⁸⁰ What came to be known as the Shari'ati-Sahami relief headquarters became a dynamic and helpful force which played a decisive role in providing relief to the disaster areas. Its success was such that the Soviet sponsored radio 'Peik-e Iran', after condemning the corruption and ineptitude of the Iranian government and the Iranian equivalent of the Red Cross in bringing relief to the afflicted areas, praised the efficiency and accomplishments of the faculty and students of Mashhad University.⁸¹

Later, in December of 1968, the construction of a dam on the Hirmand river resulted in the migration of a great number of people from the Zabol area to the periphery of Mashhad. A number of poorly clad and malnourished Zabolis unprepared for the harsh winter conditions in Khorasan froze to death. In 1968/69, temperatures fell even lower than usual, to thirty degrees centigrade below zero. At Mashhad University a relief headquarter under the auspices of Shari'ati was set up to bring assistance to the Zabolis.⁸² Once again the students participated in the collection and distribution of food, clothing and blankets to those in need.

A Diversion: Shari'ati and Jalal-e Al-e Ahmad

In the late autumn of 1966 Golamreza Emami accompanied Shari'ati to Al-e Ahmad's house in Tadjrish.⁸³ This was the first meeting between the two men.⁸⁴ They discussed Fanon, and Al-e Ahmad gave Shari'ati a copy of Albert Memmi's book, *Portrait du Colonisé Précédé de Portrait du Colonisateur*. Considering it an

important literary contribution, he asked Shari'ati to translate it. When Shari'ati failed to finish the translation, apparently because it was too difficult, Al-e Ahmad asked Homa Nateq, who successfully completed the work.⁸⁵

A few months after this first meeting, Emami returned to Khoramshahr where he received a letter dated 10 January 1967 from Al-e Ahmad. In it he wrote, 'But I have no news of that excellency (*hazrat*) Dr Shari'ati'.⁸⁶ The letter indicates that Al-e Ahmad clearly expected Shari'ati to pay him a visit soon after their first meeting. It is possible that later that year Shari'ati did in fact visit Al-e Ahmad, since his wife, Simin Daneshvar, recalls numerous visits to their house in Tehran. She also recalls a summer during which she and Jalal visited Mashhad and met Shari'ati on a number of occasions.⁸⁷

After the second earthquake in Khorasan and during the last ten days of January 1969, Al-e Ahmad travelled to Mashhad to study the extent of the disaster caused by the two earthquakes, investigate the degree to which relief had been provided to the afflicted areas and observe the tempo of reconstruction in the areas destroyed by the first earthquake.⁸⁸ During his stay, Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati met a number of times. Each of these encounters may have had some influence on the development of Shari'ati's ideas and his future discourse. On a Wednesday afternoon at Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati's home Al-e Ahmad, who was working on his book *Dar Khedmat va Khiyanat-e Rowshanfekran* (On the Service and Betrayal of Intellectuals), argued that every historical alliance between traditional intellectuals represented by the clergy and modernist intellectuals had been successful in containing, and at times inflicting losses on, the monarchy. Without the participation of traditional intellectuals or the clergy, Al-e Ahmad argued, the struggle against the monarchy would prove unsuccessful. In a symbolic gesture, Al-e Ahmad extended his hand, as the representative of modernist intellectuals, to Seyyed Ali Khamene'i, who was the only cleric present in the room. On another occasion, Al-e Ahmad reinterpreted the concept of the Twelfth Imam in occultation and said that any Muslim who takes up arms and leads a revolt against injustice and repression could be considered the Imam; the Mahdi.

Was it under the influence of Al-e Ahmad's new interpretation of the Hidden Imam that Shari'ati later developed two of his key theories? First, that of *imamate* as a concept of revolutionary leadership. Second, *entezar* or longing for the Twelfth Imam as a revolutionary posture defying the status quo while preparing for the final annihilation of all unjust systems. Belief in the Twelfth Imam, Shari'ati later argued, was faith in the fact that 'the world revolution and final victory is the continuation and result of a great historical movement for justice and against oppression in the world.'⁸⁹

Under pressure from the security forces, Jalal was frustrated, desperate and depressed when he arrived at Mashhad. Although at the time Shari'ati was himself going through a mystical and meditative phase, a state that was not hidden from Al-e Ahmad's perceptive eyes, Shari'ati seems to have inspired and invigorated him.⁹⁰ Through his encounter it seemed as if Al-e Ahmad had discovered his long

lost twin.⁹¹ Simin Daneshvar refers to the significant impression that he made on Jalal and maintains that 'perhaps it was Shari'ati's influence' that brought him back to religion.⁹² Given that Al-e Ahmad's *Khassi dar Mighat*, which is considered as proof of his return to Islam, was written well before he met Shari'ati, it is difficult to concur with Daneshvar's statement. Nevertheless, Al-e Ahmad was impressed by Shari'ati's modernist Islamic discourse and pleased to learn that the two men were in general agreement on the problem of what Shari'ati called the *assimilé* and Al-e Ahmad the Westoxicated. On his return to Tehran, he added a lengthy footnote to *Dar Khedmat va Khiyanat-e Rowshanfekran* referring his readers to Shari'ati's recently published *Eslamshenasi*, from which he quoted. He also mentioned the fact that he had had the honour of meeting and discussing at length with Shari'ati in Mashhad and had been delighted that they were in agreement on the issue of Iranian intellectuals' misconceptions about religion.⁹³ Also in a letter to Mirzazadeh, Al-e Ahmad sent his regards to all those he had frequented in Mashhad. He wrote, 'and my last salutation is to Shari'ati, who was awfully depressed. He is one of those who needs to be constantly looked after by someone. And you must do this.'⁹⁴ In the February entry of his 1969 diary, Al-e Ahmad wrote, 'During this trip, I have come to know three contemporary dignitaries of Mashhad; Azarm [Mirzazadeh], Yousefi [Golamhossein] and Shari'ati.'⁹⁵

On 10 September 1969, some eight months after his visit to Khorasan, Al-e Ahmad, a towering intellectual figure, died. Hearing the news, Shari'ati wrote, 'I completely forgot all the memories, ties, friendship, intimacy and harmony that existed between me and dear Jalal. His face faded away in my memory and instead another loomed. It was my own face! It was as if I had heard the news of my own death.'⁹⁶ Al-e Ahmad's caustic critique of Westoxication or blind conformity to all that came from the West, in addition to his return to Islam as a source of inspiration for struggle against dictatorship and injustice had brought he and Shari'ati close to one another. Simin Daneshvar witnessed their lengthy debates and discussions during which Shari'ati piled a carton of half smoked cigarettes and a box of used matches in the ashtray before him.⁹⁷ She remembered that they spoke on how to bring about socio-political change, tactics for raising the consciousness of the people, predestination and voluntarism, the reason for Man's search for God, *jihad* and martyrdom.

Shari'ati paid his intellectual tribute to Al-e Ahmad by including him in his list of 'pionners of "returning to oneself" in the Third World' along with such dignitaries as Fanon, Senghor, Cesaire, Nyerere and Yasin. Shari'ati wrote, 'Al-e Ahmad was an intellectual who had not discovered himself. It was only during his last few years that he tried returning to oneself and when he did so, his supporters accused him of being a reactionary.'⁹⁸ Praising Al-e Ahmad's account of *haj* in *Khassi dar Mighat* Shari'ati lamented the fact that even though the two had promised to go to the next *haj* together, after Al-e Ahmad's death he was obliged to make the trip alone.⁹⁹

Shari'ati's Audience and Discourse at the University of Mashhad

In the second half of the 1960s, politicised students at Iranian universities were deeply influenced by various shades of Leninism, Maoism and Castroism. After the inertia and political inactivity of the second National Front, Mosaddeqism as a liberating belief had lost its appeal. The Tudeh (communist) Party had also been discredited among the young. Even widely-praised and nationally-esteemed militant and anti-imperialist intellectuals such as Al-e Ahmad had come under attack from the revolutionary left. In a pamphlet entitled *Khashmegin az Imperialism Tarsan az Enqelab* ('Angry at Imperialism and Afraid of Revolution') written after Al-e Ahmad's death, Amir-Parviz Puyan categorized Al-e Ahmad as a petty bourgeois intellectual afraid of the socialist revolution.¹ Politically engaged students and intellectuals, therefore, gradually gravitated towards some type of revolutionary communism. It could be safely said that during these years a significant Islamically oriented political discourse or tendency was almost non-existent in the universities.

The great majority of Iranian students who constituted Shari'ati's audience fell into three categories, those for whom religion was a private and traditional affair, those who were insensitive to it and finally those who had come to oppose it. Even though a general anti-shah sentiment characterized the popular mood of the politicized university students at the time, they constituted a relatively small proportion of all students. A good number of students were too busy catching up with the Western-style mode of life and enjoyed the individual freedoms that the shah's regime had provided them. To this group, whose life-style was incompatible with traditional religious commitments and requirements, religious issues seemed retrograde and old-fashioned. To the hard-working and studious types who saw their university education as a key to a successful career and a passport to a brighter socio-economic situation, religion was at best a private affair. For such people, even if they were interested in political issues, active engagement in politics was either undesirable or too risky. For the relatively small group of politically active leftist students, religion was a metaphysical and idealist conception which was

philosophically outmoded and politically dangerous since it was believed to deter the masses from revolutionary action. In their eyes, it did not provide a tool for social transformation, but on the contrary was a barrier to change.

By 1970 the issue of armed struggle divided the political activists at Mashhad University. At this time, Shari'ati still believed that the subjective revolutionary conditions did not exist in Iran and was convinced of their determining role in the success of the revolutionary movement. He considered the education of the masses in the Islamic ideology as the key pre-requisite to a liberating revolution. The revolutionary Marxist-Leninists, however, believed in armed struggle, arguing that even if revolutionary conditions were absent, they would only come into being through action. One could learn about and prepare for the revolution by making revolution not by talking about it. The revolutionary Marxists accused Shari'ati and those who believed in talking about revolution before doing it of being 'petty bourgeois intellectuals' or spoilt and rotten intellectuals (*rowshanfekran-e gande damagh*).²

It was in such an environment that Shari'ati launched his ideas based on Islam as a change-oriented and revolutionary social force. While large numbers of the politically uninitiated and uncommitted were easily won over by Shari'ati's poetic eloquence, the Marxists were confronted with an ambiguous and enigmatic figure whose real arguments and motives they could not easily assess. He was too popular to ignore and too shrewd to be easily baited. Shari'ati made use of their intellectual tools. He employed some of their categories, expressions and concepts where it suited him. Yet he explained such concepts through a new reading and exegeses of Islam and the Qur'an. In his classes, Shari'ati defined the ideal Islamic society which the Prophet was to build as one which would be free from 'political despotism', 'capitalism and exploitation', 'the degenerated clerical institution of a reactionary religion' and 'the statesmen and nobles of the ruling class'.³

Shari'ati's discourse dealt with and attacked those very same historical phenomena, systems and institutions which the left singled out for discussion and criticism. Yet his explanations, justification and clarification of historical and social developments were couched in Islamic terms and based on Islamic sources. The appearance of an attractive rival voice which ultimately invited the young to religion was disquieting for the left, which viewed anything Islamic as change-resistant, superstitious and reactionary. When transcripts of Shari'ati's lectures during 1966-67 on the 'History of Iran from Islam to the Gaznavids'⁴ (later published as *Eslamshenasi*) were circulated his ideas gradually became available to the intellectual circles in Mashhad.

At this time, copies of Shari'ati's lecture notes even found their way to Tehran. Shams Al-e Ahmad who taught 'History of Religions' at the *Elm va Sana't* (Science and Industry) University recalls that it was through a print-out of 'Eslamshenasi', given to him by one of his students, that he first heard of Ali Shari'ati. In a candid and exceptionally honest tone, not common among renowned intellectuals of any nationality, he recalls that having read *Eslamshenasi* he became extremely jealous

of Shari'ati and comforted himself by the thought that Shari'ati must have been a 'safety valve'. Shari'ati's audacity and courage, he said, humiliated him. Several years later when he met Shari'ati, he recounted these feelings and asked for pardon.⁵

Reaction to what was becoming 'the Shari'ati phenomenon' was neither always favourable nor predictable. From April 1969, Shari'ati came under a series of veiled attacks in the Mashhad weekly *Hirmand*. In a series of intelligently written symbolic and satirical articles interwoven with astute puns, entitled *Maqameh Hantiyeh*, Hassan Mohaddess, poked fun at Shari'ati. To Mashhad's intellectuals it was clear that the subject of Mohaddess' long caustic articles was Ali Shari'ati. In the first, Mohaddess ridiculed the cigarette smoking teacher, from whose mouth circles of smoke departed like missiles. This teacher, Mohaddess wrote, had become the defender of Islam at the Faculty of Literature, while in the tradition of Khayyam he drank wine in secret, licking the stains of Liquor and Cognac from his tie.⁶ In the second article, Mohaddess gave more precise clues about his victim and quipped that he did not have 'Ali's will to challenge corruption single-handedly nor was he Abu Zarr, putting to shame the powerful and the wealthy'.⁷ Throughout the rest of the five articles, Mohaddess accused Ali of idealism, demagoguery, false pretences, pretentiousness and selfishness. Attacking his spiritualism and religious idealism, Mohaddess concluded that those who seek the reason for the destitution of the impoverished in the skies are misguided.⁸

Eslamshenasi

At the University of Mashhad, Shari'ati was involved with preparing his lectures and writing on different subjects. Aside from his mystical pieces, his written work during this period ranged from pamphleteering to in-depth academic research. Shortly after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Shari'ati retaliated fiercely against Daryush Ashuri's article, 'Anti-Zionism and anti-Imperialism in the East', in which Ashuri attacked Iranian intellectuals for their lack of independent thought. Shari'ati's article was not, however, published at the time. In November 1967, he wrote an introduction to a book by the Egyptian writer Mohammad Mandour, which he had translated and commented on as his BA thesis. 'On the critique of literature' ('*Dar naqd-e adab*') was published in the Spring of 1968 and was reviewed by Reza Davari in *Naqd-e Ketab*. However, the work that became the subject of considerable controversy, and marked Shari'ati's real intellectual debut, was *Eslamshenasi*.

On 1 January 1969, Shari'ati's book *Eslamshenasi* (Islamology) was registered and obtained legal permission for sale. In a word to his readers, he explained that the book was essentially composed of his lectures at the Faculty of Literature in the academic year 1345-6 (1966-67). In the absence of assigned texts or articles with the aid of which Shari'ati's students could prepare for his exams, two of his students, Shoja'i and Mossadeq Rashti, taped and then transcribed his words.⁹

The fact that the 640 page book has over 400 footnotes proves that it could not have simply been the unprocessed result of Shari'ati's lectures. He must have added his, at times, lengthy foot-notes to the transcribed text.

Eslamshenasi is one of the few, if not the only academically well-documented book written by Shari'ati and, as such, it reflected his concern, as a professor, with academic research.¹⁰ Shortly after *Eslamshenasi*, succumbing to the demand of his young and eager audience at different universities throughout Iran, and accepting every invitation – security forces permitting – to propagate his message, Shari'ati was forced to abandon academic research in favour of repackaging some of his ideas. Whilst at Mashhad, he was able to incorporate the research he did for his class lectures into his speeches. By December 1972, he was ridiculing those who prompted him to base his lectures and writings on research and a scientific approach. Defending himself, he compared his position to that of his life-long hero Abu Zarr. He argued that Abu Zarr's only response to Ka'b al-Ahbar's deceptive ruling on the extent of wealth in Islam was to strike him so hard on the head with the tibia of a camel that he started to bleed. Just as Abu Zarr had not engaged Ka'b al-Ahbar in a civilized debate, he too could not apply 'the scientific approach' in the face of the 'people's hunger and the pillage of capitalists'.¹¹ 'How can one be a scientific researcher in the midst of such commotion?' he wrote.¹² Looking at his writings in 1976, seven years after *Eslamshenasi*, one can find the same references and quotes he used in that book.

The first part of *Eslamshenasi*, 'What is Islam?', contained the germ of many of the ideas on which Shari'ati focused and elaborated at length later in his life. Some were concepts that he had already developed in his published and unpublished works. Shari'ati lashed out at Westernized or assimilated intellectuals, whom he accused of being entirely dependent on the intellectual production and criteria of Westerners. He invited all 'authentic intellectuals' to be original thinkers and not to parrot the West.¹³ Having ascertained that Iranian society was essentially religious, he did not wish to affront the nationalist sentiments of his audience and therefore argued that one learnt about 'the true spirit of Iran's history' through an understanding of Islam.¹⁴ Moving on to the clergy Shari'ati chided them, claiming that *Eslamshenasi* was 'the first step, in Persian, towards a scientific and analytical understanding of Islam'.¹⁵ In it he enumerated fourteen essential characteristics of 'original Islam', which he readily disassociated from actually existing Islam.¹⁶ To prove his point Shari'ati referred to one or a combination of the following sources: the Qur'an, the Tradition of the Prophet, that of the Shi'i imams and the accounts of the first four caliphs.

Eslamshenasi served a triple purpose. First, it was the presentation of a modern, egalitarian and democratic Islam as the ideal and original form of Islam. Second, the obstacles to the realization of the ideal Islam were identified. Thirdly it showed why it was incumbent upon Muslims, as true believers in the most fundamental aspect of their religion, namely monotheism (*towhid*), to challenge and overcome these obstacles.

Shari'ati's first objective in *Eslamshenasi* was to obliterate the traditional charges of conservatism and anti-modernism against Islam by demonstrating that Islam was not only compatible with certain modern concepts and concerns, but that these concepts had for long constituted an integral component of Islam. Shari'ati's attempt at reconciling what he believed to be the estranged Iranian youth with Islam, later led to the estrangement of the religious establishment. Based on the Prophet's Tradition, he sought to prove that in Islam, reason and religion were one and the same. He argued that the Qur'an contained various notions of evolution and therefore, contrary to the view of the clergy, Darwin's concept was defensible from an Islamic perspective.¹⁷

At the political level, he argued that Islam was based on democracy, majority vote and majority rule. Shari'ati argued that the concept of *showra* as in the Qur'an was the equivalent of democratic rule and as such it constituted one of the socio-political bases of an Islamic society. The procedural medium for the attainment of such a democracy was *ijma'* (consensus), which he interpreted as the vote of the majority.¹⁸ Shari'ati sought to prove that Islam even allowed for the freedom of the minority to exercise their rights by referring to those who did not vote for Imam Ali as the fourth caliph and the fact that the Imam did not curtail their freedom once he acceded to power.¹⁹

On the issue of individual rights, Shari'ati argued that during the early years of Islam, freedom of thought and expression had been prevalent. Tenacity of thought (*ta'asob*), he argued, gradually became a characteristic of the Islamic societies of the 5th and 6th century (after the Prophet's Hejira) and was followed by repression and bloodletting.²⁰ In *Eslamshenasi*, Shari'ati took a position in favour of tolerance and against the tenacity of thought (*ta'asob*) which he associated with repression and bloodletting. In an unelaborated statement he attempted to prove that individual liberties were guaranteed in Islam. He quoted from Imam Ali: 'do not be the subject of another since God has freed (liberated) you'.²¹ Later, he redefined *ta'asob* as 'responsibility' and 'commitment' to certain lofty objectives and goals and hailed it as 'one of the most noble qualities of human beings'.²² Once he became involved with constructing an Islamic ideology, Shari'ati saw *ta'asob* as a necessary attribute for those who had adopted an ideology.²³

In accordance with the open-minded spirit of *Eslamshenasi*, Shari'ati tried to prove that even unbelievers have a place in an Islamic society. Naturalists such as Abol-A'la, he argued, lived among Muslims and debated with them.²⁴ Quoting the Qur'anic verse, 'There is no compulsion in religion', Shari'ati asserted that freedom of religion was a feature of Islam.²⁵ Furthermore, in a lengthy footnote referring to the free activities of non-Muslim and even anti-Islamic scientists, writers and poets, he sought to prove the existence and widespread practice of religious tolerance in Islamic societies.²⁶

Shari'ati argued that 'universal equality' was a 'natural and fundamental principle', governing all social and private aspects of Islamic life.²⁷ The Qur'anic concept of Man's common lineage indicated that all were created equal and none could

impose his will on another. The Islamic economy as an aspect of the Islamic system was subsequently based on equality of income, consumption and the use of public wealth.²⁸ On the controversial issue of the equality of men and women, he limited himself to saying 'they are of the same origin and kind'.²⁹ Later in the book, Shari'ati admitted that Islam did not believe in the equality (*mosavat*) of men and women, but wished to place each in their 'natural position'.³⁰

Shari'ati argued that according to the philosophy of Islam, Man was both free and constrained. He was capable of voluntarism and subjected to determinism.³¹ The deterministic framework is the general law governing the process of social and historical development, which in a Hegelian fashion, tends towards the progressive unfolding of the Absolute or ideal.³² Later, he called it 'the progression of history towards the awakening of God in Man'.³³ For Shari'ati, the dialectical transformation process held the key to social and historical development. He readily admitted that the dialectical method of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis explained the general tempo of historical development.³⁴ In this sense, he employed the Marxian scheme of historical stages. Yet instead of remaining within the Marxian framework, designating a particular class as the revolutionary force which would initiate social transformation, he named the people (*nas*) as the real force behind historical development.³⁵

The second objective of *Eslamshenasi* was to identify and expose those who contradicted the rule of God and obstructed the people's right to attain perfection. Here Shari'ati identified his targets of attack. He lashed out at all those who had monopolized economic, political and religious power, which Shari'ati claimed to be the common property of all mankind, bestowed upon them by God. He claimed that polytheism did not only refer to the formal rejection of God, but included cases in which individuals performed acts which were the monopoly of God, thus substituting themselves for Him. The cult of personality, character worship or any human relationship in which an individual was blindly subservient to another was idolatry in Shari'ati's eyes. He wrote, 'Anyone who imposes his will on the people and rules according to his own whim, has made a claim to being God and whoever accepts such a claim is a polytheist, since absolutist rule, will, power, dominance and ownership is only in God's monopoly'.³⁶ Even though Shari'ati did not attack the monarchy directly, his subtle and sometimes explicit references to absolutist rule were clear and direct. On the issue of the clergy, Shari'ati was much more direct. He said: 'If we praise a religious jurist and have genuine respect for him to the extent of accepting everything he says, and every judgement he makes and every order he gives and follow every one of his ideas, we would become a polytheist and I would call this follower a "religious idolater"'.³⁷ Shari'ati also argued that Islam did not allow for a centralized and institutionalized clerical organization mediating between God and Man since God's relation with Man was a direct one. He therefore maintained that institutionalized religion would ultimately lead to reaction and dogmatism, perpetrating 'religious and clerical despotism'.³⁸

Shari'ati's third objective in *Eslamshenasi* was to prove why true Muslims should oppose polytheism as he had defined it. Having established the people as catalysts of change, Shari'ati, set out to shed the people's fear of challenging the unjust authorities. On the surface, Shari'ati made a rather naïve generalization by singling out the evil trinity of ignorance, fear and greed as the source of all deviations, sins, crimes, vileness, baseness, vice, and even underdevelopment.³⁹ The *movahhed* or the monotheistic individual, Shari'ati argued, was immune to the evil trinity. His behaviour was not governed by expediency, but by the awareness of the fact that only God was to be feared and respected unconditionally and all others were impotent before Him. Shari'ati endowed the *movahhed* with those characteristics that would make an ideal Islamic revolutionary. The *movahhed* was an 'independent, fearless, selfless, dependable and wantless' individual, who bowed to no other authority than God.⁴⁰ Later *movahhed*, the preacher, gave way to the revolutionary *mojahed*.

Shari'ati's seemingly naïve generalization, becomes a galvanizing political invitation to reject, resist and combat all sources of polytheistic power such as dictatorship, the capitalist system and the official clergy. Shari'ati also believed that Muslims were the only social agents who could rise to this historic and revolutionary occasion, since as monotheists, they could not tolerate polytheism. The polytheistic world outlook was based on contradictions. Later, using the same ideas, Shari'ati developed a world outlook based on monotheism. The 'monotheistic world outlook' (*jahanbini-ye towhidi*) became a powerful tool for action. Receiving inspiration and power only from God, the believer set out to eradicate all sources of false power. Shari'ati's 'monotheistic world outlook' was an open invitation to 'rebellion' against all false gods.⁴¹ As Shari'ati became more ideological, his tolerance began to wane.

In *Eslamshenasi*, Shari'ati presented an Islamic Weltanschauung in embryo. A world outlook, which seemed compatible with the needs of a twentieth century third world country seeking a humane and egalitarian path to development but inconsistent and contradictory since it blended religious idealism based on faith in God and revelation with materialism based on reason and scientific inquiry. Shari'ati's eclecticism, a heritage of the God-Worshipping Socialists, his style and his presentation of Islam in a contemporary light enchanted young non-partisan Muslims who had long awaited fresh ideas which they could proudly defend. These very same qualities, along with the reinterpretations and exegeses that seemed necessary to present a contemporaneous Islam, enraged both the official custodians of materialism and the religious establishment in Iran. To the Marxists, Shari'ati was Islamizing and distorting their ideas. To the religious establishment Shari'ati was liberalizing, democratizing and socializing their Islam, while intentionally disregarding the cleavage between Shi'ite and Sunni Islam.

Shortly after the publication of *Eslamshenasi*, on 8 May 1969, its first review appeared in *Hirmand*.⁴² In 'A word about *Eslamshenasi*', Hossein Razmju extolled the book. He explained why it had attracted the attention of scholars and why i

enabled him to recognize Islam anew. Razmju, a classmate of Shari'ati's at Mashhad University, praised the splendour of Shari'ati's style and said that the book had moved and touched him. He wrote, 'In my opinion (an opinion shared by impartial authorities) not many books of equal strength, breadth of vision and excellence have ever been written on Islamology, the tradition of the Prophet and history of Islam. This is an epic of great splendour and humanity.'⁴³ Razmju's verdict was shared by many who viewed *Eslamshenasi* as a manifesto for the enlightened contemporary Muslim. It was the long-awaited voice in a milieu which longed to retain its Islamic identity without the associated stigma of anachronism and staleness.

After the publication of *Eslamshenasi*, in March of 1969, Shari'ati wrote an introduction to a book on Hujr ibn-'Addi. Hasan Akbari-e Marznak, a student of Shari'ati's at the University of Mashhad recalls that on a snow-covered winter day when classes had been cancelled because of the heavy snow, he met Shari'ati on campus.⁴⁴ Interested in the life of Hujr ibn-'Addi, Marznak asked Shari'ati for references on Hujr's life. After learning that Marznak knew some Arabic, Shari'ati gave him a few references and from then on constantly enquired about Marznak's research on Hujr. Once Marznak's work on Hujr, which was primarily based on translations, was finished, he gave the text to Shari'ati and asked him to write an introduction to it. Shari'ati wrote a long introduction and gave the book to a publisher.

In his introduction, Shari'ati severely criticized the clergy on a number of issues. First, he held them responsible for the absence of educational texts on the life of Islamic luminaries. If the heroes of Islam, such as Ali and Hossein, were not really known by the people it was because the clergy believed that 'the love of Ali' and 'shedding tears for Hossein' was enough for them.⁴⁵ Second, Shari'ati argued that instead of shedding light on the ideas of such characters and treating the principles for which they struggled throughout history, the clergy dedicated their time to writings on trivial rituals or compiling the reports of imams. In his first scathing attack on the main pillars of traditional Shi'i scholarship, Shari'ati argued that what were considered as classical Shi'i references were of no use to the educated layperson and that such books should be 'kept out of their reach'.⁴⁶ Books such as Majlesi's magnum opus, *Bahar al-Anwar*, Shari'ati believed, 'caused great disasters' even in the hands of preachers.⁴⁷ Third, Shari'ati criticized the clergy for their inability to introduce lesser known Islamic figures who could become perfect role models for the young. Personalities like Abu Zarr, Salman, Ammar and Hujr were the true followers of Mohammad's struggle against idolatry, the nobility, despotism, ignorance and capitalism. According to Shari'ati, the struggle for justice, equality and people's rule, which was launched by Islam and constituted the objective of these men, was a cause which would continue to exist until the implementation of such ideals.

Politicizing Islam and lashing at those who had depoliticized it, Shari'ati reminded his readers that Hossein left his holy pilgrimage of *haj* unfinished to wage a holy war against those who had trampled upon true Islamic principles. Shari'ati

wrote, 'observing religious rites and rituals is useless when such rituals come to lose their meaning and spirit. Turning around the Ka'ba is of no use to an en-chained people.'⁴⁸ Instead of awakening the people and helping them free themselves from 'repression, lies, humility and bondage', Shari'ati wrote, the clergy have contributed 'nothing other than repetitive and identical *resaleh amalieh* [explanatory texts on religious rituals and practices] on the rites and rituals of *nejasat* (uncleanliness), *taharat* (purity and cleanliness), *zebh-e shar'i* (beheading animals according to proper religious rites) and *shakiyat* (domains of doubt in religious propriety).'⁴⁹ As an intellectual, Shari'ati considered his own role as that of introducing the lives and ideas of the heroes of Islam and thereby familiarizing the people with their own history, from which they could learn and in which they could take pride. Shari'ati's introduction to *Hujr* was, nevertheless, an open challenge to the authority and position of the traditional clergy. The expected clerical backlash came on the heels of Shari'ati's remarks.

The Intellectual Left and Shari'ati

It did not take long for the left to respond to Shari'ati's *Eslamshenasi*. In the Spring of 1968, while *Eslamshenasi* was still in lecture-note form, Ali Akbar Akbari published an article in the monthly edition of *Hirmand*. The article must have come as a surprise since the journal's editor, Ne'mat Mirzazadeh, and Akbari were both close friends of Shari'ati's. Akbari had been a member of the God-Worshipping Socialists in his youth, later joined the Iranian Peoples Party and became a Marxist in 1961. He was an anti-Tudeh Marxist who never joined any particular Marxist party or group. The *Hirmand* article was followed up by a review article in the left literary magazine *Fasla-ye Sabz*,⁵⁰ and in 1969 by a book, with the somewhat ambiguous title of *An Analysis of Certain Social Problems (Barrasi-ye Chand Mas'aleh-e Ejtema'i)*.⁵¹ Evoking standard Marxist-Leninist arguments on the origin of classes, class struggle, historical materialism, the superiority of higher stages to lower stages of social development, the development of imperialism, the deterministic role of productive forces in explaining socio-historical events and an attack on social-Darwinism, Akbari sought to expose Shari'ati's methodological and theoretical shortcomings. To demonstrate the 'scientific' validity of his Marxist position, Akbari supported his arguments with references to Amir-Hossein Aryanpur's book *Zamineh-e Jame'ehshenasi*.⁵² In class, Shari'ati's Marxist and revolutionary detractors based their arguments primarily on Akbari's critique. However, as firm believers in armed struggle and the vanguard theory of revolution they opposed Akbari's non-revolutionary and legal Marxism.⁵³

In his introduction, Akbari explains that he not only wishes to criticize Shari'ati's work but also to present an alternative view on social and philosophical topics. Akbari's book, however, is essentially a Marxist attempt at demonstrating that despite Shari'ati's radical assertions, his beliefs and theories are nothing but a re-

vamped version of old 'idealist' and 'reactionary' thoughts based on a 'metaphysical' method of analysis.⁵⁴ Akbari wishes to caution Shari'ati's disciples that their intellectual mentor is only a pretender whose path would neither lead to development nor to liberation. In a polemical tone Akbari maintains that:

Through the use of reactionary ideas, falsification of history, distortion of science, the falsification of the theories and ideas of others, Mr Shari'ati misleads his students and readers from a correct understanding and a scientific grasp of society, thereby increasingly assisting the forces of reaction and underdevelopment.⁵⁵

Akbari takes issue with Shari'ati on a number of points. First, he disagrees with Shari'ati's definition of class. According to Shari'ati social classes are either based on economic and material conditions of social life or on religious and popular beliefs.⁵⁶ Shari'ati makes a clear distinction between 'economic classes' and 'belief classes', acknowledging in a footnote that the concept of 'belief classes' is his original contribution.⁵⁷ He maintains that while in ancient societies classes were formed on the basis of beliefs, in recent epochs classes are essentially rooted in economic conditions.⁵⁸ Ignoring Shari'ati's distinction, Akbari rejects the notion of 'belief classes'. He invokes the Marxist argument that classes are the product of material or economic relations between individuals, whereas ideas and beliefs are ideological relations and are therefore simple emanations of the real material base. Akbari concludes that 'belief classes' are 'figments of Mr Shari'ati's imagination' and 'have no real foundations nor have they ever existed in any society at any time.'⁵⁹

Shari'ati develops his concept of 'belief classes' in order to explain the emergence of what he considers to be the clerical class. He maintains that this powerful class has existed throughout history because the masses believed that an intermediary was needed to define and overlook their relation with God. Shari'ati explains that the clerical class generates a centralized, hidebound, change-resistant and repressive 'clerical institution' (*sazeman-e rowhaniyat*) which could in turn lead to reaction and the emergence of 'religious and clerical despotism.'⁶⁰ He points out that Islam condemns the emergence of a 'religious aristocracy' and its corollary. By deliberately categorizing the clergy as a variant of an oppressive class, Shari'ati wants to prompt his intellectual audience to draw the conclusion that the relation between the clerical institution and the masses cannot be anything but antagonistic. Bound by his ideological discourse, Akbari is forced to reject Shari'ati's broad conclusion on the clergy, the clerical institution and the contradiction between the masses and the clerical class. He argues that only the landowning clergy can be categorized as feudal landlords and subsequently despotic and reactionary while the non-landowning clergy must be considered as anti-feudal, anti-despotic and progressive.⁶¹ Ironically the Marxist becomes the protector of the clergy and the Islamist their bitter foe.

Second, in the tradition of Kasravi, Shari'ati attempts to undermine the long-held Shi'ite notion of intercession (*shafa'at*). He argues that it is not mediation [of an imam] that will determine the felicity or damnation of individuals, but their

own acts and innate qualities.⁶² Oblivious to the real purpose of Shari'ati's argument which is to reject the clerically held notion of mediation, Akbari argues that human qualities are not innate but the result of the individual's social and class position. Going off on a tangent, Akbari enquires, how can such effects become the cause of felicity or damnation?⁶³

Third, Shari'ati accuses the civilized nations of colonization, exploitation, enslavement, deception, injustice, corruption, aggression and war.⁶⁴ Akbari criticizes Shari'ati for his inability to distinguish between the Western countries and the capitalist classes in these countries. The absence of class analysis, Akbari argues, would lead to 'outrageous and unpardonable errors'.⁶⁵ Akbari argues that Shari'ati uses every occasion to attack and criticize capitalism in an 'unscientific' manner. Through this type of analysis he argues that Shari'ati whips up hatred and repugnance towards capitalism among his readers.⁶⁶ According to Akbari, colonialism has long tried to present Iran as a capitalist society and has consequently tried to substitute the false struggle against capitalism for the real struggle against colonialism and reaction.⁶⁷ Akbari tries to demonstrate that Iran is still in the pre-capitalist stage of development and since capitalism is a superior historical stage compared to feudalism, he concludes that the growth and expansion of capitalism in Iran is progressive and desirable.⁶⁸ In a scathing attack on Shari'ati, Akbari calls him 'a supporter of the landlords', and 'reactionary'.⁶⁹ He writes:

You admire the past, you are regressive. You oppose industry and the growth of technology in Iran. You have no liking for the sciences and consider modern civilization to be corrupt. You have labelled modern Man as corrupt and murderous. You search for morals and ethics in the past and believe that modern civilization will eradicate morals, ethics and religion. You wish to delay the forward movement of our society as much as possible.⁷⁰

It is ironic that Shari'ati was also of the opinion that his leftist opponents were in league with feudal-lords. He lamented that in 'an underdeveloped eastern country' such as Iran, the left intellectuals directed the 'sharp edge of their struggle and criticism not against feudalism and the landlords (*khan*), but towards philosophical idealism and God.'⁷¹

Finally in the last section of his book Akbari subjects Shari'ati to criticism, slander and ridicule. In a passing remark (in parenthesis) Shari'ati refers to a rather confused aggregation of historical stages of transformation as 'primitive stage, nomadic and pastoral stage, agricultural stage, civilized stage, feudalism, bourgeoisie'.⁷² Outraged by this erroneous presentation, Akbari accused Shari'ati of lacking in the most elementary and rudimentary knowledge of social problems.⁷³ In an emotional statement Akbari writes, 'Has anyone forced Mr Shari'ati to write on issues about which he does not know the first thing? Is he obliged to tire and poison the mind of readers with such pseudo-learned gibberish and rigmarole?'⁷⁴

The fact that Shari'ati used the language of the left in order to attract the young to a redefined Islam must have prompted Akbari to demonstrate the difference between Shari'ati's 'false radicalism and distorted Marxism' and the 'progressive

theory of scientific socialism'. It is also conceivable that, having read Shari'ati's *Eslamshenasi*, Akbari thought that Shari'ati's misrepresentation of Marxian ideas and analysis would confuse his readers, misguide them and thus prove harmful to the anti-shah movement. A more personal reason is also evoked which should be considered with caution. It is said that the 'Shari'ati phenomenon' at the University of Mashhad had started to bother Akbari.⁷⁵ In the course of a discussion between Shari'ati and Akbari at the university's cafeteria, Shari'ati is said to have reproached Akbari for his use of 'an official language', by which he meant the employment of the official Marxist language which was in vogue among sympathizers of the Tudeh party (which Akbari was not). Akbari, however, misunderstood the remark and was extremely offended. He had presumed that by 'an official language' Shari'ati had implied that Akbari was towing the 'government's line' and supporting the government's ideas and policy positions. Akbari had returned what he thought was an insult by enquiring whether he was using an 'official language' or Shari'ati?⁷⁶ The fact that this incident occurred before the appearance of Akbari's critique may indicate that it caused the article and ultimately his book.

In response, Shari'ati is said to have belittled Akbari's book by considering it a statement of personal animosity and even insinuating that it was the work of SAVAK.⁷⁷ Some of Shari'ati's students, however, remember that after the publication of Akbari's book, even in private circles, Shari'ati always spoke of him with respect.⁷⁸ In public Shari'ati never attacked Akbari on personal grounds. In the course of a lecture in 1972 when he was at the height of his popularity, Shari'ati differentiated between his ordinary detractors and Akbari. In his caustic style, Shari'ati referred to Akbari's book and said 'its author was a highly enlightened and intellectual friend' and added that 'of course his book does not represent his own personality and that his thoughts are far more valuable'.⁷⁹

The Revolutionary Left and Shari'ati

The revolutionary left's unofficial response to Shari'ati's lectures came in a letter from Amir-Parviz Puyan and Masud Ahmadzadeh in the autumn of 1968. Ne'mat Mirzazadeh was the courier between the old friends whose different ideologies had gradually estranged them. He recalls that having read the letter, Shari'ati had handed it over to him saying, 'see how this year's sparrows wish to teach those of last year'.⁸⁰ Shari'ati was referring to the fact that he was some thirteen years older than Puyan and Ahmadzadeh. The contents of the letter, which was written with a red ball-point pen and signed by both Puyan and Ahmadzadeh, included a number of objections to Shari'ati's ideas expressed in his classes and especially in *Eslamshenasi*.

First, they objected to the 'unscientific' and 'metaphysical' nature of Shari'ati's thought. In the Iranian political circles of the time, 'scientific theory' was the code word for socialism and 'metaphysical ideas' referred to religious or Islamic posi-

tions. In reality Shari'ati was being chided for presenting social problems through an Islamic rather than a purely Marxist-Leninist discourse. Second, they objected to Shari'ati's introduction of concepts and ideas that confused the youth in 'selecting the correct path to solving Iran's social problems'. In the letter, Shari'ati was accused of playing a deviant and schismatic role among the young. For Puyan and Ahmadzadeh, the assessment and critique of social problems from a religious perspective and the provision of 'progressive' solutions based on a particular Islamic interpretation was a deviant alternative to Marxism-Leninism. The fact that a Muslim could also lash out at capitalism and imperialism and call for a democratic and egalitarian society, threatened the Marxist-Leninist monopoly of social criticism and change. Third, Shari'ati was accused of wasting the revolutionary energy and potential of the youth by preoccupying and engaging their minds with abstract, pedantic and speculative matters rather than preparing them for radical and revolutionary political change. Fourth, Shari'ati was criticized and ridiculed for his superstitious beliefs and practices, especially his spiritualism. The letter referred to the fact that Shari'ati had participated in occult seances during which spirits were called forth at the University's dormitory. It was argued that such nonsensical activities could only deceive and mislead students, detracting them from revolutionary action, their supposedly primary concern. Finally, on a more personal note, the letter expressed Puyan and Ahmadzadeh's concern about Shari'ati's self-imposed loneliness and political isolation at the time.

Puyan's growing stature as a radical Marxist-Leninist intellectual enhanced the significance of his critique among Mashhad's leftist community. His disapproval of Shari'ati gradually became ever more acerbic and virulent. It is said that Puyan had implied that Shari'ati was an 'American agent' and a 'member of SAVAK'.⁸¹ Tolou, a close friend of both Puyan and Ahmadzadeh rejects the notion that Puyan made such a statement.⁸² He argues that at the time both might have believed that the end result of Shari'ati's activities would benefit the government, but he adds that 'we all knew Shari'ati well enough to know that he could not have been an agent.'

After Puyan's conversion to Marxism in 1966 and Ma'sud Ahmadzadeh's conversion some two years later, a loosely knit cluster of revolutionary left students gradually took shape around them. Puyan, who was at the time studying in Tehran, travelled to Mashhad regularly and became acquainted with Bahman Ajang who had Marxist tendencies even before he entered Mashhad University. It was through Ajang that the Marxist circle primarily composed of students from Mashhad University was constituted. The main figures in this group, the members of which later constituted the Mashhad branch of the Peoples' Fada'ian Guerilla Organization of Iran, were Bahman Ajang, Hamid Tavakoli, Sa'id Aryan (Hamid's brother-in-law) and Ali-Reza Galavi, all of whom were Shari'ati's students.

The relationship between Shari'ati and his Marxist students, who exercised considerable influence among politicized students, was delicate. At first, Shari'ati was branded as 'an agent of the US, the CIA and the Pahlavi regime', and accused

of obstructing the imminent communist revolution in Iran'.⁸³ Students taking his course for the first time were warned against his 'sweet talk', which was deemed unlearned, deceptive and politically dangerous. As time went by, however, Shari'ati made an impression on key members of the Marxian circle. Ajang, who took one of Shari'ati's courses and had very much moved his teacher with his final exam essay, soon came to the conclusion that all the rumours about Shari'ati's suspicious allegiances were completely baseless.⁸⁴ In Ajang's view, even though religion was reactionary, Shari'ati wished to modernize Islam. In the process of reviving a modernist Islam, Ajang believed that Shari'ati did not wish to engage the Marxists in a narrow-minded debate. Shari'ati's open-mindedness distinguished him from other religionists. Antipathy toward Shari'ati among the Marxists palpably declined, until at some point there was discussion among their members of the possibility of tactical alliances with Shari'ati. Based on the clear understanding that the two had incompatible ideologies and that 'water and oil could not mix', the Marxists gradually came to accept a critical yet amicable *modus vivendi* with Shari'ati and his followers.

The Marxists' non-antagonistic position towards Shari'ati did not mean intellectual non-engagement. In his classes and outside, Shari'ati came under considerable pressure from this group of students.⁸⁵ He was pressed to clarify his position on idealism and materialism, the historical stages of social development, the definition and essence of social classes and finally the historical role of religion as a catalyst of change. One of his students recalls that many leftist students, who were firm believers in armed struggle as the only justifiable means of political change, at times even abused Shari'ati's modesty and courtesy.⁸⁶ As soon as topics such as 'social class', 'materialism' and the 'role of religion' came up they discredited his ideas with their well prepared discourse. Shari'ati's classes became an arena for the revolutionary Marxists to practise their newly acquired arguments and theories. Shari'ati, however, enjoyed the challenge and allowed them to voice their opinions.

The Religious Establishment Reacts

On one of Shari'ati's trips to Tehran in the autumn of 1968, after the start of his irregular lectures at Ershad a group of well-wishing friends among whom were Motahedin, Bazargan, Motahhari and Falaturi visited him and his father.⁸⁷ At the time, *Eslamshenasi* was at the publishers. The group informed Shari'ati that some of his clerical enemies had already made a list of the errors and misinterpretations they had found in the text of his lecture-notes. He was also informed that Falsafi, a prominent preacher, had already attacked him from the pulpit and in Tabriz a few preachers had been incited to disparage him in the presence of Ayatollah Khosrowshahi. Shari'ati was also told that a few bookshops had conspired to obstruct the distribution of his book in Tehran. In order to unfold the plans of his

enemies, this group hoped in vain that Shari'ati might alter his position on some of the issues raised. The group confronted Shari'ati with a number of problems in *Eslamshenasi*, which in their opinion were controversial. The topics were previously prepared with the help of Motahhari and Bazargan. It should be kept in mind that the issues raised were coming from members of the most open-minded Islamic circles of the time, themselves under pressure from the traditional Islamic circles.

First, according to Shari'ati, after the death of Mohammad human beings had to rely on their own intellect. The group felt that Shari'ati's statement, rejecting the need for edicts based on revelation, undermined the notion that Islam was an eternally valid and dynamic religion.⁸⁸ Second, Shari'ati had argued that during the fifteen years after his marriage, the Prophet had become an embourgeoisified conservative and a defender of the status quo.⁸⁹ The group opined that such a statement was 'absolute infidelity'. Third, in *Eslamshenasi* Shari'ati had rejected the commonly held notion of the Prophet's perfection and argued that the concept of evolution applied even to the Prophet, whom God always instructed to seek more knowledge. Shari'ati's well wishers argued that this position implied that even after his prophethood, Mohammad was still lacking or deficient.⁹⁰ Unsuccessful in convincing Shari'ati to modify or change some of the arguments in his book, the group left in desperation.

In contrast to the Left's swift rebuttal, the religious establishment's reaction to Shari'ati was very slow. Even though anxiety about the content of his lectures and *Eslamshenasi* was voiced in 1968, published clerical criticism did not appear until late 1971, nearly two years after the publication of *Eslamshenasi*. By this time Shari'ati had published numerous other books (mainly his lectures) and clerical criticism was, therefore, directed at both those works and *Eslamshenasi*. Once, however, the first pamphlet and book attacking Shari'ati appeared a long streak of condemnations, villifications and denunciations followed from clerical quarters.

Among the books written by Shari'ati's Islamic antagonists, *Eslamshenasi dar Tarazu-ye Elm va Aql* (Islamology Judged Rationally and Scientifically) by Ebrahim Ansari-e Zanjani focused only on *Eslamshenasi*. The book, which appeared in January 1973, addressed the major problems of *Eslamshenasi* from the point of view of the traditional Shi'i clergy. Ansari-e Zanjani arranged his criticism under three main headings; first, Shari'ati's errors on Islamic issues, second his errors on Shi'ism and finally his position on the clergy.⁹¹

Under the rubric of Shari'ati's errors on Islamic issues, Ansari-e Zanjani presented three major arguments. First, he challenged Shari'ati's position on *khatemiyat* or the finality of Prophethood after Mohammad. This point was similar to that raised by the group of well wishers. Shari'ati had argued that Mohammad's claim to being the last Prophet did not mean that his teachings sufficed mankind until eternity. He argued that after Mohammad, human beings attained a stage in their evolution which enabled them to conduct their affairs on the basis of reason. At this stage they no longer needed to be guided by revelation.

Therefore, Shari'ati argued that after Mohammad, reason replaced revelations as a guide to proper conduct.⁹² Ansari-e Zanjani argued that human reason could never develop to a stage where it could act independently, promulgating perfect laws without reference to or based on revelations. He contended that according to both Shi'a and Sunnis the formulation and promulgation of laws was the monopoly of God and Shari'ati's attempt at divorcing law from its divine origin was 'sheer infidelity (*kufr*) and in contradiction with Islam'.⁹³

Second, Ansari-e Zanjani contested the Islamic justification of Shari'ati's opinion on the equality of men and women. However, he added that since later in the book Shari'ati himself had dismissed his earlier contention and had admitted that Islam did not believe in gender equality, there was no point in pursuing this matter.⁹⁴ On the issue of polygamy and the veil, which Shari'ati had condemned as distasteful and humiliating in the modern age, Ansari-e Zanjani characterized Shari'ati's position as one which 'condemned God and subordinated Him to the rule of His subjects'.⁹⁵ He accused Shari'ati of being both 'ignorant and irreligious'.⁹⁶ Furthermore, he suggested that under the influence of Europeans Shari'ati had rallied against his own 'national practices and traditions'.⁹⁷ In a more provocative tone he submitted that Shari'ati's defence of unveiled women was an apology for sexual promiscuity which he implied was practised at Hosseiniyeh Ershad.⁹⁸

Third, on freedom of thought in Islam, Ansari-e Zanjani argued that in the field of principles of religion, those things that have been made permissible and those that have been categorized as forbidden by the Qur'an and the Prophet will remain fixed until eternity and there can therefore be no room for the application of human thought.⁹⁹ Shari'ati's assertion that freedom of thought constituted a basis of Islam was repudiated by Ansari-e Zanjani who argued that even in cases where the application of independent thought was permissible it was only within the domain of the religious experts or *ulema* to pass judgement. He labelled the intervention of non-experts such as Shari'ati as 'a great mistake and an unforgivable sin'.¹⁰⁰

With reference to Shari'ati's errors in Shi'ism, Ansari-e Zanjani attempted to demonstrate that he not only used Sunni references to prove his arguments, but also sought to vindicate Abu Bakr and Omar from all the charges brought against them by the Shi'a. He pointed out that Shari'ati's use of the two Qur'anic verses on the topic of consultation (*showra*) to justify and promote elections on the basis of majority vote was incorrect.¹⁰¹ Whereas Shari'ati had attempted to prove that Abu Bakr's election as the first caliph was based on democratic procedures, which he tried to promote as one of Islam's socio-political principles, Ansari-e Zanjani argued that the choice of the first caliph was the responsibility of the Prophet and not the people.¹⁰² In accordance with mainstream Shi'i thought he argued that the Prophet had designated Ali as his successor at Qadir. Ansari-e Zanjani held those who disobeyed the will of the Prophet and participated in the 'ominous council and the sinister democracy' responsible for all the misfortunes that had befallen the Islamic community after the death of the Prophet.¹⁰³

The validity of Shari'ati's account of the Prophet's contentment, just before his death, at the sight of Abu Bakr leading the congregational prayers was attacked by Ansari-e Zanjani. He contended that the report (*hadith*) on which Shari'ati had based his argument was invalid since it was considered a weak *hadith* and the reporter was of dubious reputation.¹⁰⁴ On the basis of Shi'i sources, Ansari-e Zanjani argued that the Prophet sent for Ali to lead the prayers and when Abu Bakr disregarded the Prophet's will and led the prayers himself the Prophet pushed him aside angrily and took over.¹⁰⁵ In a lengthy chapter, Ansari-e Zanjani demonstrated the evils of Abu Bakr and Omar. He claimed that Ali Shari'ati, his father Mohammad-Taqi and the Hosseiniyeh Ershad had always attempted to prove the piety of Abu Bakr and Omar while covering up the 'betrayals and villainies' of these two caliphs.¹⁰⁶

Concerning Shari'ati's position on the clergy, Ansari-e Zanjani argued that the whole purpose of writing *Eslamshenasi* had been to slander, vilify, attack and destroy them.¹⁰⁷ He rejected Shari'ati's notion that the clergy in Islam were intermediaries and that their necessity hinged on this function.¹⁰⁸ In response to Shari'ati's claim that the clergy's privileges were undeserved and that they constituted a hegemonic, dictatorial force over the people and that this situation gave rise to inequality, he claimed that since the clergy were steeped in science and knowledge it was only natural and fair that they would not be equal to others.¹⁰⁹ Regarding Shari'ati's contention that an official clerical institution (*sazeman-e rasmi-e rowhaniyat*) has no place in Islam, Ansari-e Zanjani claimed that if by the 'official clerical institution' Shari'ati alluded to an all-clergy institution, he would concur with Shari'ati. However, the criteria for membership was not the clerical garb but the educational process necessary for such a position. He argued that even people such as Shari'ati or Bazargan who did not wear the religious garb could become members of this institution only if they were to study the required texts with experts in the field of religious science.¹¹⁰ Shari'ati's characterization of the clergy as hidebound and narrow-minded was rejected by Ansari-e Zanjani, who argued that they were the defenders of the faith and acted according to the dictates of Islam.¹¹¹ In conclusion Shari'ati was accused of being in the service of Saudi Arabian Wahhabis and regurgitating old and deviant ideas.¹¹² Shari'ati was also threatened and reminded that in Islam deviants are initially invited to understand the truth through debate; but if they continue to dispute the truth, then force would have to be used against them.¹¹³

Later, though wounded, Shari'ati lamented that among his detractors it was only Seyyed Ebrahim Ansari-e Zanjani who he would never forgive for having slandered and defamed the women who had attended his lectures. Enraged at the accusation that the women at Ershad were simply there to engage in 'sexual promiscuity', Shari'ati warned, 'woe if there be a tomorrow after today'.¹¹⁴ Even a 'hireling and a slut,' he wrote, 'would not be so unscrupulous as to make such accusations'.¹¹⁵

A Cat and Mouse Game

'I have fallen prey to the hunter, his arrow pursues me'

On 8 January 1968 Gholamreza Takhti, the 1956 Olympic champion of middle-heavy free-style wrestling and a popular hero, admired for his chivalry and his National Front activities, died in dubious circumstances. The Iranian press reported his death as a suicide, a claim that, irrespective of its validity, was never believed by the people. Takhti was given a hero's burial.

Takhti's death provided an ideal occasion for students across Iran to vent their anti-regime feelings and at Mashhad University's politicized Faculty of Medicine they decided to commemorate the fortieth day (*cheleh*). In solidarity, a few students at the Faculty of Literature also produced a bulletin in which Ne'mat Mirzazadeh's poem, 'An obituary for Takhti', was to be published.¹ Three hundred copies of the bulletin were printed in Mashhad and Mosaddeq Rashti, a student of the Faculty of Literature, was given the responsibility of transporting them to Tehran. The airplane ticket to Tehran came to 300 tomans. Unable to shoulder the expenses, Mosaddeq Rashti went to Shari'ati, whom he knew well, to solicit a donation. Fishing around in his pockets, Shari'ati found 65 tomans, from which he contributed 60.

On 26 February 1968, a meeting to commemorate the foundation of the Iranian Peoples' Party was held at Mosaddeq Rashti's home. From nine in the evening the guests began to arrive. Eleven people attended among them Delasa'i, Fazlinejad, Abbas Elahi, Asghar Elahi, Hashem Elahi, Mojtaba Jazayeri, Cyrus Sahami and Ali Shari'ati. Some of them, including Sahami, were not at first aware of the fact that they were attending a political meeting of the Iranian Peoples' Party.² Discussions continued until two in the morning. Shari'ati referred to his experiences in France and argued that success in political struggle was only possible through a relentless educational campaign. He criticized the type of political struggle conducted in Iran and argued that the only alternative was to create a conducive militant environment in the universities. People, he said, had to be compelled to think. His own political vocation was to pose problems and provoke contradictions in the minds of his students. Rejecting the importance of organizational activities at that time, Shari'ati argued that his most important contribution was what he did in the classroom. Abbas Elahi and Shari'ati were at loggerheads over the correct

strategy for effecting political change. At this time Shari'ati called for a gradual process of change based on raising the consciousness of the people, while Elahi called for political activism. Mosaddeq Rashti recalled that the meeting ended inconclusively and the participants left in an atmosphere of ill feeling.³

A week after this meeting, the students at the University of Mashhad, particularly from the Faculties of Medicine and Literature, planned a strike to protest cuts in the university's budget.⁴ Although Shari'ati had advised against the strike, the students proceeded with their plan on 6 March 1968. The next day SAVAK began rounding up suspected leaders. Some fifty-two students, mostly from the Faculty of Medicine, were arrested. Mosaddeq Rashti recalls that on his arrival at the University, Jalal Matini, the head of the Faculty of Literature, informed him that he should report to SAVAK's headquarters in Mashhad.

Mosaddeq Rashti was subsequently arrested, interrogated and transferred to the Army's prison, where he was incarcerated for seven and a half months. Among those arrested and detained was Ali-Akbar Maghmumi, a third-year student at the Faculty of Medicine. Mojtaba Jazayeri, who was recruiting Maghmumi to the Iranian Peoples' Party, had told him about Mosaddeq Rashti's and Shari'ati's involvement in the publication of the bulletins and with the student strikes.⁵ According to a letter from the chief of SAVAK in Khorasan to the chief of SAVAK in Tehran, in his interrogations Maghmumi had accepted the charge that he and the students arrested had been involved with Communist activities.⁶ Maghmumi had also indicated that the dissident students had been in contact with Ali Shari'ati through Mosaddeq Rashti.⁷ Even though, Mosaddeq Rashti dismissed Maghmumi's claims and the other detainees also attested that Shari'ati had not been involved with any subversive activities, he was summoned to SAVAK for an 'interview', a euphemism for interrogation.⁸ According to Mosaddeq Rashti, SAVAK was primarily seeking the authors of the bulletin on Takhti.

After his return to Iran and his first detention at the border and eventual imprisonment in Tehran, this was the first time Shari'ati had been summoned by the security forces. Published SAVAK documents on Shari'ati indicate that there were no contacts between him and SAVAK between 1964 and 1968 when he was interrogated over the Takhti affair. Nor is there any trace of SAVAK's mediation or intercession on his behalf during this period.⁹ All claims, therefore, that SAVAK played a role in Shari'ati's employment at the University of Mashhad, or had obtained his promise of collaboration before he was allowed to teach seem completely unfounded and malicious.¹⁰

On 31 July 1968, Brigadier-General Bahrami, the chief of Khorasan's SAVAK dispatched what he called 'a written statement obtained (*akhz*)' from Shari'ati, subsequent to 'his summons to SAVAK and his interview'.¹¹ Attempts have been made to claim that Shari'ati's statement during his interrogation was an attempt to befriend the authorities through an unsolicited 'letter' from him to SAVAK; but the wording of Bahrami's letter is undeniable proof that the document was written under duress, as all interrogations are, and that it was not a friendly 'letter'.¹²

Before discussing Shari'ati's interrogation statements, it should be pointed out that almost all Shari'ati's dossier at SAVAK has been published by Sayyed Hamid Rowhani, an adversary of Shari'ati's who until recently had a monopoly over such documents. Although one may feel confident that what Rowhani has selectively published is factual, what he has chosen not to publish and the numerous cases of 'surgery'¹³ he has performed on the published documents detract from their value and the conclusions that can be drawn from them. They are, however, valuable in the sense that it can be said with a high degree of certainty that Rowhani has compiled the most 'incriminating' documents he could find in the dossier. Researchers are therefore insured against the possibility of later revelations that would prove that Shari'ati was more 'compromising and appeasing' to the regime than it appears from Rowhani's selected documents. Public access to the SAVAK documents will probably enhance Shari'ati's image. However, the future emergence of statements which were removed by his partisans from Shari'ati's dossier after the revolution, may some day provide some surprises. The fact that certain documents were indeed removed is proven by their occasional publication in personal memoirs published in Iran.

Interrogations

In his interrogations, Shari'ati presents himself as a man discontented with the situation in his country and pessimistic about its future. Shari'ati wrote that his words represented the response of educated youth to questions such as; what do you think? why were you an opponent of the regime? and what do you think of the new domestic and foreign policies? Questions posed by a regime that has undergone a transformation in its thinking and its policies and one which had embarked on a programme to reform different aspects of society.¹⁴ Subsequently, in response to the questions of his interrogators, Shari'ati wrote a long-winded and selectively detailed autobiography. In it he spoke about his father; the role and significance of the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths; the anti-Tudeh activities of the Centre; his youth; his anti-Tudeh activities; his faith in Mosaddeq and his supporters as reformers, nationalists, anti-feudalists and defenders of social justice; his opposition to clandestine activities and his support for public and legal political activities; his arrest in 1957; his negative feelings about SAVAK during the time of Bakhtiar and his positive impression of the security forces after his arrest in 1957; his departure to Paris; his political activities in Paris; his disagreements with fellow students and activists over political tactics and strategy; his arrest and imprisonment after his return to Iran; his gratitude towards the agents who arrested him and those who interrogated him.¹⁵ In the last part of his statement, he presented what he called 'a new scientific and sociological analysis of the Iranian ruling class and his Imperial Majesty the Shahanshah who stood at its apex'.¹⁶ Shari'ati argued that this analysis provided a key to his political philosophy.

In a startling manner, Shari'ati's description of the political situation in Iran resembled what is called a 'Bonapartist state' in Marxian jargon.

The 'Bonapartist state' according to both Marx and Engels was primarily characterized by the state's high degree of independence from social classes, or what Poulantzas called the 'relative autonomy of the state vis-à-vis the dominant classes or fractions'.¹⁷ The two other distinguishing features of a Bonapartist state are the state's role as a mediator and arbitrator between warring classes, intervening against or in favour of the economic interests of one or another class only to realize its own political interests and the determining and absolutist role of the Emperor (ruler).

Shari'ati argued that the ruling class in Iran was neither dependent on, nor did it represent, the economic interests of any particular social class.¹⁸ The shah, Shari'ati argued, was a supra-class figure, free of all class attachments. In Iran, he suggested, one could argue that a 'ruling class' did not exist. Therefore, all classes could conceivably benefit from fundamental transformations without resorting to violence and engaging in revolutionary activity. Shari'ati referred to the social reforms that had occurred in Iran since 1964 and argued that, based on the decision of one individual (*shakhs-e ishan*), feudal lords, who had constituted Iran's ruling class and whose demise had seemed impossible, were suddenly smashed and Iran's social and class structure fundamentally altered.¹⁹ What made the Iranian state unique, Shari'ati argued, was the fact that such a social transformation had occurred without a change in Iran's political form or a change of regime. Shari'ati believed that the reforms proved that the shah's regime was capable of manipulating Iran's class structure to its advantage by strengthening, weakening or even annihilating any class that it willed. Based on expediency and its own interests and irrespective of the economic strength and stature of a particular class, Shari'ati maintained that the regime could sacrifice a class, irrespective of its strength, and thus adopt a revolutionary posture. On the basis of these arguments, he claimed that 'the underprivileged and disinherited (*mahrūm*) classes in Iran could be optimistic about the abolition of class discrimination and the realization of their social and class objectives within the present political framework and without resorting to violence and opting for a revolution'.²⁰

Shari'ati was therefore arguing that it was possible to achieve radical and revolutionary goals without resorting to revolutionary violence. Indirectly he implied that the educated and discontented Iranian youth expected fundamental steps towards the improvement of the economic conditions of the disinherited. Shrewdly, Shari'ati stated that the 'abolition of class discrimination', which was his primary objective, could also become the objective of the regime. In a way, he was telling the regime what he believed was in its best interests.

Realizing that his statement could be construed as a prescription, and thus enrage the regime he followed up on his thinly veiled, rather unrealistic suggestion by hinting that the shah was both open to new ideas and in favour of supporting the interests of the disinherited classes. He added that, 'his Imperial Majesty has

definitely decided to introduce as many radical social transformations as possible and wherever possible.' In an advisory but wishful tone he said, 'I am certain that the grounds and conditions for the acceptance of all novel and revolutionary projects, which would reform the present situation, are to a large extent prepared and available.'²¹

In another astute move, instead of denial and dissimulation, Shari'ati informed and prepared the security forces for his future activities. This became a rather odd and inexplicable hallmark of all his important interrogations. He admitted how glad he was that under the prevailing conditions he could express and divulge all the inspirations and ideals that he had, for a long time, developed and kept secret in his heart or at best referred to in symbolic forms. 'Under the present circumstances, I can discuss my ideas and ideals wherever I want. I can say it publicly and loudly and I can demand it with the certainty that it would be accorded.'²² Shari'ati concluded by adding that he remained a serious observer of the rapid and radical social transformations in Iran and once again added that he believed that the attainment of revolutionary objectives was possible within Iran's political system.²³

The use of the theory of a Bonapartist state and its application to the conditions of Iran in 1969 allowed him to voice his major concerns and ideals without pitting himself against the power of the state and inviting the wrath of the security services. It allowed him to affirm and explain the social reforms undertaken by the regime. Shari'ati instead made the state and the shah accomplices to his own designs. In his interrogation, instead of denying his principle political objective of 'abolishing class discriminations', the blunt affirmation of which would have allowed the authorities to brand him as a 'communist', he reaffirmed his objective and presented it as a desirable objective which the shah and his regime should be interested in and eventually adopt. Shari'ati defended his Mosaddeqist past and Mosaddeq's policies and objectives. He made believe that the shah's Iran was a democracy where he could openly express his beliefs and his opinions. How could anyone dare say that it was not? Thus Shari'ati paved the ground for his future activities.

Shari'ati's interrogation statement, however, also included appeasing words and sometimes double-edged praise. He explained how the 'prompt and indiscriminate attention' given to their case by SAVAK, when they were arrested in 1957, 'left a good impression [on the detainees]'.²⁴ He lauded the 'proper conduct, kindness and good manners' of the two agents who accompanied them to Tehran after he was arrested.²⁵ Shari'ati pointed out that, instead of being 'intimidated and scared' by the security agents, as was the case in the past, his interrogators 'tried to hold a dialogue, discuss and convince' him!²⁶

Shari'ati, who knew that he was considered a conspirator against the security of the state, wished to minimize his anti-regime political activities, focus on his pro-government activities, while emphasizing his scholarly and theoretical approach to politics. He therefore made certain declarations that were aimed at misguiding the security forces and getting himself off the hook. Shari'ati disclaimed

his participation in political demonstrations, sit-ins and political activities while in France.²⁷ Referring to his radio programmes in Mashhad during 1954, he insinuated that his speeches were against the Tudeh party and communism.²⁸ To enhance his academic stature with the security forces, he also credited himself with certain false attributes such as having obtained two doctorates, having worked at France's highly reputable National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and having been Professor Berque's assistant.²⁹

On the basis of Shari'ati's statement, Bahrami informed SAVAK headquarters that 'if this individual [Shari'ati] was properly guided and directed, he would become a positive element [an asset] for the country'.³⁰ From the SAVAK documents published by Rowhani there seems to have been no reports by SAVAK concerning Shari'ati between July 1968 until April 1969.

From Autumn 1968, Shari'ati was invited by various universities across Iran to deliver speeches and lectures. His first guest lecture was on 6 November 1968 at the Petroleum University of Abadan, where he spoke on the 'Psychology of technique'. Shari'ati recalls that after his lecture around 1000 students gathered at the university cafeteria for an informal discussion and at the end some of them chanted anti-regime and revolutionary slogans.³¹ From Abadan he flew to Tehran, where he started his lecture at the Melli University at six o'clock in the afternoon and finished at one in the morning.³²

From the regime's point of view, Shari'ati's lectures must have had a disquieting or subversive content. It is also possible that SAVAK's decision-makers were advised by its informers who attended the lectures that Shari'ati's oratory was provoking undesirable political reactions among his audience. Alerted by Shari'ati's talks, in a letter dated 11 April 1969, Tehran's SAVAK instructed its Mashhad office to probe into the modality and the process by which Shari'ati had come to be invited by the universities in which he had lectured.³³ Clearly SAVAK was not only uninformed about Shari'ati's lectures but was angered enough to investigate why he was being issued with so many invitations. Having 'interviewed' Shari'ati, in a report Bahrami responded to SAVAK's inquiry. He wrote that, according to Shari'ati, when he had been invited by Dr Puyan the chancellor of the Melli University, Mr Khosrow Hedayat, vice-president of the National Iranian Oil Company, the chancellor of Tabriz University, and other university chancellors, he [Shari'ati] had assumed that the programmes had been arranged with the prior knowledge of SAVAK, especially since some of those university chancellors even welcomed him personally at the airport. According to Bahrami, Shari'ati had said that, 'since SAVAK was aware of the fact that he was fighting on two fronts (the clergy and the left) and that he was presenting a new idea, he thought that it [SAVAK] had planned to take advantage of his scientific lectures.' Having realized that SAVAK was not informed, Shari'ati had inquired why, instead of asking the gentlemen who had invited him, SAVAK was reproaching him.³⁴ According to Bahrami, Shari'ati had added that he was subordinated (*moti'*) to the system (*dastgah*), a firm believer in the country and willing to serve. Shari'ati had reportedly said that the decision to

use or not to use him depended on the opinion of higher authorities (*maqamat-e 'alieh*). He is said to have concluded that, 'from now on whenever I am invited I will inform SAVAK'.³⁵

The Ban on Public Lectures

Notwithstanding their order that Shari'ati should report his invitations, on 22 April 1969 Tehran's SAVAK formally prohibited him from delivering any more public lectures without its knowledge and approval.³⁶ Khorasan's SAVAK was informed of this decision and was instructed to convey the interdiction to Shari'ati. The issue of his lectures tours and their popularity at various Iranian universities within only six months, brought Shari'ati once again under the close scrutiny of Iran's security forces.

In a report to Tehran's SAVAK on 25 April 1969, Bahrami pointed out that before having received the 'above edict' (*amriyeh foq*) Shari'ati had been informed that he should not accept any further invitations to lecture without the prior permission of SAVAK.³⁷ The 'above edict' probably referred to the conditional ban on Shari'ati's lectures. From the content of Bahrami's report it becomes clear that Shari'ati had been again questioned by Khorasan's SAVAK on all his lecture engagements. According to Bahrami's report, Shari'ati had been invited to lecture at Tehran University on 27 April and had also been invited to speak at Hosseiniyeh Ershad and the Students' Islamic Association while he was in Tehran. In his report, Bahrami opined that:

As it has been repeatedly reported, Dr Shari'ati is very useful to foreign agents and extremist elements, he would, however, be more useful to SAVAK and the country if he were properly managed. This person is very knowledgeable, he is unacceptable to extremist clerics while leftists trust him. Khorasan's SAVAK believes that curbing Dr Shari'ati would result in his loss of faith in the system (*dastgah*) and the country and since he has many supporters, this may have undesirable results, yet if he were controlled by a well organised programme and project, in view of his novel ideas, he could become useful.³⁸

Aside from Bahrami's lucidity it is clear that, by this time, SAVAK in Khorasan was in disagreement with Tehran over the extent of the danger presented by Shari'ati and the method of dealing with him. Bahrami was probably well informed about Shari'ati's popularity, which led him to believe that Shari'ati's ideas would eventually weaken whatever hold leftist and traditionalist religious tendencies had on university students. Bahrami, however, could not go beyond the evident and assess the long-run impact of Shari'ati's lectures. Even though Tehran was interested in the damage that Shari'ati could do to the cause of the leftists and the religious establishment, it was clever enough to be suspicious of the galvanizing and arousing content and tone of his seemingly anti-leftist and anti-clerical discourse.

In response to Bahrami, General Moqaddam, the powerful head of SAVAK's

Third Bureau, reiterated that since Shari'ati had a 'damaging past' and 'it was not yet clear whether from a political point of view he was a healthy element or not,' he should not accept any invitations to lecture.³⁹ Moqaddam added that irrespective of what Shari'ati had thought, 'his invitations to lecture at various universities were not with the prior knowledge of SAVAK'.⁴⁰ After less than three months of vacillation, the decision to finally place a complete ban on Shari'ati's lectures at various gatherings until further notice was formally documented.⁴¹

In a report from the 312th division of SAVAK to Sabeti, it is explained that in view of Shari'ati's affiliation with the National Front and the fact that 'his speeches were not in the students' interest,' Shari'ati had been informed that he should refrain from accepting invitations to lecture at universities.⁴² The report referred to Shari'ati's controversial statement in his initial lengthy 'interview' that, 'I [Shari'ati] prefer to think that it is not I who has changed but the government that has changed its practices'.⁴³ It also alluded to the content of Shari'ati's other interviews with Khorasan's SAVAK in which he had mentioned that due to Shahanshah Aryamehr's concern, contrary to its previous practice, the system wished to free the intellectuals and university students from their state of mental subjugation and repression. The report, dated 13 July 1969 (22/4/48), clearly influenced by Bahrami's analysis of Shari'ati, suggested that Shari'ati, 'who has a considerable number of followers and is a learned person, can be beneficially utilized if he is properly guided'.⁴⁴

To assess the extent to which SAVAK could co-opt or use Shari'ati, the report sought permission to summon Shari'ati to Tehran's SAVAK for a 'discussion'. In this report the information conveyed by Mashhad's SAVAK to the effect that Shari'ati would be in Tehran by 1 August and would by then have completed a document containing his 'principles, ideas and objectives' is repeated.⁴⁵ Under pressure about his motives, according to a report from Bahrami to Tehran's SAVAK, Shari'ati seems to have promised to write a statement in which he would expound his 'principles, ideas and objectives'.⁴⁶ This statement was not written until after Shari'ati's meeting with Sabeti in Tehran. At this stage, having banned Shari'ati from lecturing anywhere outside Mashhad University, Tehran's SAVAK was willing to assess the validity of Bahrami's case concerning the possibility of using him in the interest of the regime. In a telegram to Khorasan, the office was instructed to inform Shari'ati that he should contact Tehran's SAVAK through Mr E. N., phone number 762817, and that his date of departure to Tehran be reported by a telegram.⁴⁷

Even though Shari'ati was summoned to Tehran's SAVAK he did not make contact on the scheduled date and the authorities were somewhat upset about the delay. In a letter dated 22 September 1969 after Shari'ati's meeting with SAVAK officials in Tehran and his return to Mashhad, Bahrami tried to explain Shari'ati's tardiness.⁴⁸ From the letter it can be determined that Shari'ati finally met with Attarpur (Hosseinzadeh) for a few minutes and was then interrogated or 'interviewed' by Sabeti for some four hours.⁴⁹

Sabeti was the towering figure of SAVAK. Better known to the Iranian people by his euphemistic title of *maqam-e amniyati* (the security authority), he featured on television programmes during which captured political activists were 'interviewed' and recanted. He was the key man responsible for tracking down, capturing, extracting confessions and meting out punishments to political dissidents, activists and revolutionaries. Sabeti's official position was that of the 'Head of the First Bureau of Operations and Investigations.' The fact that he had personally spent four hours interrogating Shari'ati proved that the security forces were both curious and anxious about Shari'ati.

The purpose of the interview was to 'discern the objectives' of Shari'ati.⁵⁰ It is clear that Sabeti was unable to detect Shari'ati's true intentions, his real convictions and the degree to which he could be relied on to further the interests of the regime. Shari'ati's typical style of evading clear answers by engaging in long-winded philosophizing and paternalistic advice to his pursuers while clearly avoiding the use of radical and revolutionary clichés, usually made it difficult for his interrogators to diagnose him. Sabeti, however, was not Bahrami who could be tamed easily by sweet words. He was neither fooled nor convinced of Shari'ati's harmlessness, let alone his usefulness. To decide on whether the ban on Shari'ati's outside talks and lectures should continue he needed more information. So during his 'interview' in Tehran, 'it was suggested [by Sabeti] that Shari'ati should write his ideas, programmes and future plans' in relation to his objective of introducing and launching a new Islamic discourse.⁵¹

The only evidence of this document, which Shari'ati wrote after his return to Mashhad and before 22 September 1969 (31/6/48) are four butchered original manuscripts which Rowhani has selectively cut and pasted from a ten-page document in addition to approximately six type-written pages claimed to be copied from the original.⁵² This document is most probably the written script of an interrogation session at SAVAK headquarters in Mashhad, since first a question is asked, followed by Shari'ati's answer and a relevant follow up question. For example, in response to the question, 'in relation to the past could you explain the transformation in your thoughts?' Shari'ati expounds on how thoughts are composed of two dimensions, first ideals and then the means of attaining those ideals.⁵³ He then states that he remains steadfast to his ideals of securing progress, welfare and honour for his country, yet his views on the means of attaining those goals were constantly undergoing change as time, his situation, outlook and internal and external conditions changed. Subsequent to Shari'ati's answer a closely related question is posed, 'what are these ever changing conditions; comparing the present to the past what changes have occurred?', to which he repeated that it was not he who had changed but the government and the socio-political conditions.⁵⁴

In a most revealing statement of intentions, Shari'ati candidly outlined his ideals and objectives. He told his interrogators that he was in favour of 'Iran's independence from political and economic tutelage to foreigners, social transformation; a change in the ugly, worn-out and unjust social relations; an endeavour

to familiarize and enlighten all social strata and classes to their rights; the ability of all to benefit from education, culture and social rights; an improvement in the level of civilization, industry, culture and public wealth of society and a struggle against superstitious ideas and reactionary traditions which had caused the stagnation and demise of society'.⁵⁵

To effect such changes, however, Shari'ati shifted from hazardous political to safer cultural means of struggle. The new generation, he believed, was more in need of 'correct and proper intellectual nourishment' than a 'political struggle'.⁵⁶ He rejected standard political activities as 'useless', a 'waste of time and manpower' and 'incapable of achieving' their stated objectives. In inoffensive, even appeasing terms, he said the responsibility of those who wished to 'serve their society' was to 'save young people from Westoxication' and to familiarize them with their 'racial and national heritage'. Hammering at the safe topics of reviving the new generation's 'lost self' and freeing Islam from its 'reactionary and superstitious' past, Shari'ati, maintained his posture as a provocative reformer, whose objectives were not bothersome to SAVAK.⁵⁷

Referring to the ban on his lectures, Shari'ati lamented that they had been misconstrued by the authorities simply because they had attracted very large audiences.⁵⁸ At the end of his interrogation, Shari'ati wrote one of his simple yet enigmatic lines, from which different people could infer whatever they wished. He wrote 'I am not insisting that you should permit me what you would not like me to do, but I insist that you should not charge me with an accusation which I have never appreciated'.⁵⁹

After about six months of inquiries, cross-examinations, 'interviews' and interrogations, a memorandum signed by Attarpur, Sabeti and Moqaddam, dated 7 October 1969, declared the non-opposition of SAVAK to Shari'ati's lectures at the gatherings to which he was invited.⁶⁰ The memorandum, however, ordered Khorasan to closely control his conduct and scrutinize his speeches and to ensure that they included 'useful material on the current reforms in the country'.⁶¹ Khorasan's SAVAK was further instructed to secure Shari'ati's 'cooperation', to 'guide and use' him and to report the result of his activities to Tehran's SAVAK.

Although Shari'ati was allowed to lecture he was under constant surveillance. On numerous occasions he was summoned to provide 'explanations'. As much as he stalled, he was eventually forced to show up and talk his way out of the situation.⁶² On 30 November 1969, during a lecture at the Faculty of Literature at Mashhad, Shari'ati said 'see how these seemingly important people with fat yet empty heads, devoid of character and all else try so hard to satisfy the interests of their masters'.⁶³ The statement was a thinly veiled snipe at the shah. Tehran's SAVAK was immediately briefed by its informants and inquired about the meaning of the sentence. Asked by Khorasan's SAVAK to explain his statement, Shari'ati shrewdly argued that by 'these seemingly important people', he meant those who were returning to Iran from abroad and having forgotten their glorious past copied the foreigners!⁶⁴ In the midst of his verbose and tautological response on the

importance of Iran's glorious past, as if humouring the SAVAK, he suddenly said that 'we should learn about Cyrus the Great's period since he was the first learned and mighty leader who inscribed the Human Rights Charter.'⁶⁵

From February 1970 until March 1972 there are no published documents on SAVAK's position, opinion or correspondence on Shari'ati. However, towards the end of September 1971 Shari'ati's employment at the University of Mashhad was terminated at the behest of SAVAK, which must have finally decided that his presence on the university scene was undesirable and his influence among the students injurious to national interests. Having failed to secure his 'cooperation', SAVAK must have come to the conclusion that Shari'ati could neither be 'guided' nor 'used' properly in the interest of the regime. In a way SAVAK's decision to terminate Shari'ati's employment at Mashhad University was an attempt by this office to redress the mistake they had committed in their evaluation, estimation and analysis.

A Mind Under Pressure

Shari'ati's passion for communication was not limited to his lectures, speeches or writings primarily addressed to a particular public. He often wrote an account of his thoughts, his mental dilemmas, the problems that he encountered, the solutions that he pondered on and his own mental tug of war and disputations. In these accounts, appropriately entitled *Dialogues of Solitude*, Shari'ati reveals his most intimate thoughts and feelings.⁶⁶ His candid narratives, although seldom dated and therefore difficult to place in a precise historical perspective, allow for a fairly accurate description of his state of mind and preoccupations.

A few months before his entanglement with SAVAK over the 'Takhti Affair' in early 1968, Shari'ati was in a melancholic and unsettled mood. This was a period when he was torn between two types of engagement each requiring its own particular mode of behaviour and terms of social existence. While his deeply-felt gnosticism and quest for inner knowledge required spiritual retreat, seclusion and an abandonment of people and their fate, his political convictions and sense of social commitment commanded him to become engaged in politics and lead the life of an activist if not a revolutionary. As a result, he remained undecided on the correct political course of action.

Shari'ati lamented that he was constantly reproached by friends for his disheartening words and his pessimism, which was said to discourage the young from political activity. In private, he conceded that his friends were right, but argued that he had already travelled the path of political activism and knew that the destination of fellow-travellers was nothing but death.⁶⁷ The dilemma was whether to tell the truth, gratify the enemy and dishearten friends, or to delude the young by trumpeting promises with fatal consequences. His decision at the time was to accept all accusations, rebukes and slanders yet remain honest and avoid what he believed to be falsities. He accepted the fact that his honesty may cost him his

fame and past reputation. 'I did not want to and could not deceive others for my own sake.'⁶⁸

Shari'ati believed that the radical and revolutionary youth who accused him of political inactivity 'lacked political experience and the maturity required for struggle.'⁶⁹ Respectful towards their intentions and their love for freedom and independence, he warned that in the late 1960s, 'revolutionary conditions were not yet ripe' and that premature revolutionary action would 'awaken the government', 'render it more coercive' and subsequently 'delay the revolution'.⁷⁰ As a result of premature political activities, Shari'ati argued that the revolutionary youth were 'denied the relative freedoms they possessed in the past' and were 'forbidden to speak and write'.⁷¹ Caught between what was considered politically correct among radical intellectuals and what he deeply believed to be right, Shari'ati could only share his reflections and dilemmas with the silent yet receptive pieces of blank paper that surrounded him. Personified by a pensive and melancholic young Tunisian accused of past political activities, Shari'ati told his own story: the story of a man who was silenced because of what he considered to be the political excesses of infantile leftism.

Shari'ati's popularity as an orator and the expectations of his followers added to his woes. He knew they wanted him to lead them in their political quest. But he did not believe, at this stage, in drawing them into a political whirlpool from which a safe exit was, he knew, impossible. Invoking the futility of political struggle under prevailing circumstances, he found himself in the predicament of all those revolutionaries who believed that long-lasting transformations could not be achieved overnight. He sounded like the legal Marxists during the Russian revolution, or the old guard of the second National Front who abandoned political activism and chose to wait for the appropriate hour.

His heart, however, told him that he should return to his 'pigeons' which awaited him with their 'innocent eyes'. Returning to them, however, meant political engagement and all the problems that it invited. He wrote: 'Anyway, aside from these pigeons, what else does this man have under the blue sky?'⁷² Could Shari'ati find a way to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of his young disciples, the interaction with whom constituted his only social *raison d'être*, without pushing them into what he believed to be the abyss of revolutionary activities? Was his nature incompatible with 'breaking eggs to cook an omelette'? Or was he yet not convinced that the eggs had been laid or that the time was right to break them? Did he see himself as the messenger of the recipe and not the cook? Whatever the case, the tightrope on which he was trying to walk was formidable, arduous and joyless. To the 'young revolutionary generation', which accused him of not being politically active enough, he honestly declared, 'I am a man who writes and talks and that is all.'⁷³ As much as he wanted to prepare revolutionary conditions, his predicament was that his words spawned passion, conjured revolutionary zeal and provoked action. Caught between reason and passion, Shari'ati wrote:

I have always been righteous, my pen has always been an honest servant of either my heart or my head and save these two, it has never served another master. If there has been a betrayal, I have betrayed myself, no one else has been the victim. My head has fallen victim to my heart and how hard I tried to avoid this.⁷⁴

Shari'ati's embroilment with SAVAK gradually dragged him away but did not cut him off from his exhausting and perfect world of gnosticism which was the reason behind his pensive and melancholic mood. An unpleasant and persevering reality began to haunt him, absorbing his attention and consuming his concentration. Referring to the period after SAVAK's first inquiries about Shari'ati's public speeches and the conditional ban on them, he wrote, 'I have fallen prey to the hunter, his arrow pursues me, they want to kill me, they want to skin me, they will pluck my eyes, they will cook my meat, tear me up and eat me.'⁷⁵ Irrespective of Shari'ati's rather exaggerated predictions about his fate, it is clear that he deeply sensed the danger and was preparing himself for what might have been in store for him.

Referring to his own plight, Shari'ati described a city, every inch of which was occupied by 'high walls' through the holes in which one could only see the 'flickering lights of the spears of the caliph's Cossacks' and where only the 'pitiless sound of their boots' could be heard. In the city he depicted, there was not a house nor a room or a corner where one could find refuge from 'the watchful eyes of the usurpatory government's detectives'. For the past 2000 years, Shari'ati wrote, 'the usurpation of government, the despotism of the Caliphite and their oppression has become evident and public.' However, he added 'the *jihad* for freedom and liberation has commenced and the taste of independence, deliverance, free elections, freedom to elect a leader according to the will of the people, the right to vote, and the freedom to speak and write has found its way into their hearts.'⁷⁶

Probably after one of his summons to Khorasan's SAVAK, he wrote, 'I thank you Lord, I have escaped once again, I have once again emerged clean, healthy, well and upright from the sewer. Oh! I have been bargaining for four months employing all existing languages.'⁷⁷ His rejoicing after his escape was probably premature. Soon, complications with Tehran's SAVAK over his lectures again disrupted his life. As he put it, 'the walls were rapidly closing in on me from every side.'⁷⁸ In an understandably frustrated and desperate mood he explained that he had no hope of breathing free air and tasting freedom again. Denied the ability to write and publicize his ideas, he asked 'What else can I do? I can smoke, I can dream, I can be sensitive, I can endure and that is all.'⁷⁹

Shari'ati's six months of forced silence, regular interrogations and systematic surveillance of his acts and words wore him down: 'They have blindfolded me,' he wrote, 'placed locks on my lips, tied my hands from behind around a tree, put shackles on my ankles and set guards to watch on me.'⁸⁰ He often spoke of being physically sick and running a high fever. It was not easy to manoeuvre one's way out of the grasping claws of the security services. Shari'ati's success at getting his

way through sophistry, tautologies, appeasement, dupes and bluffs became more and more difficult as he was confronted with more cunning and astute inquisitors. For how long could he tell his interrogators that what he was preaching was for the good of the country while informers reported that even his ordinary lectures at Mashhad University, perhaps in spite of his intentions, created a volatile political atmosphere? Shari'ati's attempt at convincing SAVAK of the political neutrality of his lectures and his 'good intentions' was wearing thin. The game of cat and mouse tired him out. Being constantly on guard not to say the wrong thing or to make the wrong gesture was becoming unbearable. He wrote, 'I am tired, wounded, weak and I can no longer bear to fight.'⁸¹

Weary of the pressure on him and the unceasing haggling with the security forces, Shari'ati spoke to himself: 'I am the only one who cannot talk! I have forgiven everything, I have disregarded all, I will even promise my allegiance (*bay'at mikonam*) and all I want is to talk and they won't let me.'⁸² He referred to the lingering feelings of fear, suffocation and yearning that reminded him of his pitiful existence during these years.⁸³ Frustrated with his inability to speak and drained by the ever-mounting pressure, Shari'ati even thought of suicide. He wrote, 'How effortless and easy it is to die! All it needs is a simple decision.'⁸⁴ If he were single, he said, he would have accepted death's invitation, yet his responsibility towards his family, especially his children, dissuaded him from doing so. According to Shari'ati, at this time his marriage was also under great pressure and his wife was chiding him for his inability to look after and provide a comfortable life for the family.⁸⁵

Around 10 September 1969, at the depth of his hour of despair, and probably before his 'interview' with Sabeti in Tehran, Shari'ati wrote an important memorandum which throws light on the crucial political issue that at the time preoccupied him. Reflecting on Mosaddeq and his era, he praised the man and his efforts, but commented, 'we witnessed his destiny, and we saw that his faith, love, sincerity and concerns did not yield anything but pain, distress and "three wasted" years of these people's life and this generation.'⁸⁶ In a rhetorical fashion, as if he was trying to provoke himself and prepare for his important 'interview' in Tehran, he questioned the extent to which Mosaddeq's actions were of service to Iran:

Had this patriotic old man predicted 28 Mordad, would he have not served his country more by retiring silently to a corner in Ahmadabad, sitting, living alone and dying, without this generation ever knowing him and becoming fond of his words, thoughts, feelings and even sorrows. What am I saying? Would he have not reduced the misery of this afflicted nation?⁸⁷

As though convinced of the validity of his own argument, Shari'ati went as far as saying that Mosaddeq, who was a politician and knew the world around him, should have 'kept quiet' even if for him to keep quiet was more difficult than dying.⁸⁸ Painfully, Shari'ati questioned his own heritage as a Mosaddeqist and a political activist. Without referring to Allahyar Saleh's famous thesis of 1963, which

had become known as the 'policy of patience and yearning' (*siyasat-e sabr va entezar*), Shari'ati presented the same kind of argument. He was no stranger to the political debate over reform or revolution and recalled how he had defended the cause of revolution against his father's defence of reform.⁸⁹ During this period, however, he had become partially convinced of the durability and long-term benefits of reform.

Feeling as if his mood and this type of analysis would be very much appreciated by his inquisitors, Shari'ati suddenly pricked himself out of what might have been a conviction or a delusion. He abruptly assailed his own idealism and lashed out at his deeply-felt gnosticism. Exorcising himself and casting India in the role of Iran, he wrote, 'Gnosticism will dispirit and weaken India even more. She should look for a Mao of her own.'⁹⁰ Taking the argument a step further, he concluded that his country needed a realist, neither Mosaddeq's tears nor Shari'ati's book of poems were of any use to it. It needed a liberating revolutionary such as Mao Zhe Dong.⁹¹ Within his own mind he counteracted his resignation with a surge of revolutionary activism, thus regaining his inner peace and balance.

Delighted with his victory over the security forces, after which he was once again allowed to lecture at different universities, Shari'ati's mood changed considerably. Suddenly his writing became challenging and provocative. Proud of the acclamation and praise that he was receiving for his speeches he reminded himself that he no longer cared for such commendations:

In those days, I was young and in search of fame, I was strong and epic-like, I was a man in the style of the *Shahnameh*, in the style of the men of Khorasan! At present I am a wounded old man, ill, weak, and in search of anonymity and now I am a *ghazal*-like person, in the style of Shams-e Tabrizi's book, the Indian style.⁹²

As much as he tried to attenuate his joy in his writing, it exuded fulfillment.

Part of Shari'ati's gaiety was due to an important implicit understanding which he had deliberately chosen to ignore. He knew that he was allowed to resume his lectures only on the condition that he would prove his 'good intentions' towards the regime. This meant that SAVAK expected him to at least include certain laudable comments about the reforms and policies of the regime. In a defiant, yet elated passage, Shari'ati explained how he had lectured at Shiraz's Pahlavi University, where he had been highly praised by the students, without having observed the normal routine of asking permission to begin his lecture, addressing the distinguished personalities in the audience, mentioning the shah's name, or praising the regime or anything that had to do with it.⁹³ Shari'ati basked in the glory of his sting. He ridiculed his hosts and, referring to himself in the third person he wrote:

They spent so much on inviting him and the reception for him, they paid him two thousand tomans to come and speak for an hour, yet he did not allude to anything nor thanked anyone, he talked about everything but did not even make the slightest reference to the country's current progress, and the White Revolution.⁹⁴

During this period, Shari'ati's moments of joy and exhilaration were few. Under surveillance, he took refuge in his solitude and occupied himself with his books and writing. Back from an interrogation session in Tehran, a gloomy Shari'ati is said to have lighted another cigarette with the one he had just finished and confided in his colleague Reza Qanadan that, 'Until now, I thought that the administrators of this regime were a bunch of idiots and the thought filled me with joy, but this time that I was summoned, I realized that I was wrong.' He added that in the past, when someone 'interviewed' him he had easily been able to convince them that he was not a danger to the government and that his lectures were in the country's interest. At the end, he would make some promises and the interrogators would agree to leave him alone. During his last 'interview' in Tehran, as he began to lecture as usual, repeating his old lines, he was interrupted by his interrogator and asked if peace was undesirable, to which Shari'ati had responded, 'certainly not'. His interrogator had agreed, but added that he knew what kind of objectives were pursued 'under the pretext of *khaneh-e solh*'⁹⁵ (the centre for peace) and that Shari'ati's discourse was analogous to that of *khaneh-e solh*. He had then asked Shari'ati to answer his questions directly without beating around the bush. After this interview, he realized that his interrogator could not be easily fooled.⁹⁶ Qanadan recalls that Shari'ati's employment at the University of Mashhad was terminated only a few months after this dialogue.

Hosseiniyeh Ershad

'A building at first'

The idea of an unconventional religious institution which would appeal to a different audience than that frequenting the traditional mosques was by no means new. Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati's Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths in Mashhad was the pioneer of this type of establishment. Later, in 1960, Ahmad Alibaba'i had organized a series of congregations at his home during the month of mourning, Safar. At these gatherings, the traditional ritual of grieving over the martyrdom of Imam Hossein gave way to a different arrangement. The professional tear-jerking *rowzehkhani* was replaced by lectures on the social, political and economic aspects of religion and its relevance to modern life. The speaker was not perched on a pulpit surrounded by a public seated cross-legged on the floor. Instead, he stood behind a table or lectern addressing an audience seated on chairs. Following the precedent of the Mashhad Centre, the lecturers at Alibaba'i's meetings were not traditional religious types, but Islamic modernists seeking to actualize religion. The public was also very different. Instead of the mosque-going zealots with their unquestioning faith in their formalistic religion, the participants at the Centre and at Alibaba'i's gatherings were mainly politicized intellectuals and students raised in religious families yet striving for viable this-worldly arguments from which they might construct an intellectual defence of their faith. The two key lecturers in what later became known as 'The Monthly Talks Society for Displaying the Correct Path of Religion', were Morteza Motahhari and Mahmud Taleqani. The Monthly Talks Society was also financially supported by a few wealthy bazaari philanthropists such as Ja'far Kharrazi and Mohammad Hodayun.

In April 1963 the inhabitants of Qoba street, located in the predominantly well-to-do Northern part of Tehran, saw construction workers digging the foundations of what at the time was thought to be a mosque. Within a few months, a large area had been enclosed and a spacious tent erected a few hundred meters away from the construction site. While Bazargan, Taleqani, Sahabi (father and son) and Alibaba'i were on trial for their political activities and the regime thought that by imprisoning them it could weed out their ideas, their friends and followers were working to open another front. In the late autumn of 1963 Ershad began its religio-cultural activities in makeshift quarters. The news of Ershad's activities reached

Bazargan, Sahabi and Alibaba'i, who were serving their sentences in Borazjan prison. In a letter from Haj Sadreddin, Alibaba'i was informed that in the footsteps of his efforts, a Hosseiniyeh modeled on the Monthly Talks Society was being found by Mr Hodayun, his friends and with the cooperation of Mr Motahhari.¹ At this time, Ershad had not yet legally registered itself as a religio-educational charity organization. Initially, Mohammad Hodayun had put up some 24 million rials for the purchase of 4,000 square meters of land in the Chaleharz area on which a 1,000 square meter structure was to be built. While Hodayun, the pious merchant and philanthropist, who had been encouraged by the momentum and positive impact of the Monthly Talks Society remained the financial magnate behind the project, the conception and idea of Ershad, the direction and shape of which underwent considerable change over time, belonged to others.

Nasser Minachi Moqadam, a friend of Bazargan's and a man closely associated with the Iran Freedom Movement played a key role in the conceptualization and materialization of Ershad. Minachi, a shrewd lawyer and an astute manager with solid links to the bazaar, drafted and finalized Ershad's statute and internal by-laws which defined it as an educational and research charity organization devoted to scientific and religious inquiry. Minachi recalled that, 'in the legal spirit of Haj Hossein Aqa Malek's endowment in Khorasan, which was drawn up in such a way that even Reza Shah could not expropriate it, I tried to draft a legal structure for Ershad which would block any encroachments by the state, individuals or organizations.'² As the driving administrative force behind Ershad, Minachi dealt with the endless everyday problems that occurred through different stages of its evolution. His task, however, was facilitated by the fact that he had the full and unswerving trust of Hodayun; even though he had also financially contributed to the organization's capital fund, his share was small as compared to that of Hodayun.

Morteza Motahhari, a very well educated cleric, was one of the main instigators if not architects of the Ershad project. At the time, Motahhari belonged to a group of progressive clerics (which included Abolfazl Musavi Zanjani, Mahmud Taleqani, Mohammad-Taqi Ja'fari and Mohammad Beheshti) who had combined forces with well educated Islamic lay intellectuals, intent on freeing Islam from the ossified and formalistic fetters that had been forced upon it by the conservative clerical custodians of the faith. Through his active participation in the Monthly Talks Society and the dialogue that preceded the publication of 'A Discussion on Religious Leadership and the Clerical Institution', Motahhari and his friends had drawn a clear distinction between their own modernist view of Islam and that of the traditional conservative clerics who argued that Islamic precepts were eternally valid and tampering with them, sacrilegious.³ This reformist group later became the target of vindictive attacks by the hidebound clergy.⁴

While Motahhari's input into developing the idea of Ershad as a centre from which a modernist Islamic discourse could be propagated is apparent, the extent to which he actively participated in setting the institution in motion is questionable.

Motahhari was an intellectual cleric who wished to produce and organize scholarly academic research and lectures in an already finished and well-functioning establishment. He was not the type to dirty his hands and shoes in the mud, closely supervising the construction of the Hosseiniyeh, or to run from one government office to another resolving its endless everyday legal and administrative problems. He wanted Ershad to become another al-Azhar and himself to be its rector.

The First Phase

The period between autumn of 1963, when the activities of Ershad started under a tent, and the Winter of 1967, when its building was finished and it was legally registered as a charitable organization, could be considered as its first phase. According to Ershad's articles of association, registered on 14 January 1968, its three founding members were Mohammad Homaun, Abdol-Hossein Aliabadi and Nasser Minachi Moqaddam.⁵ The organization was administered by a three-member Board of Directors (*hey'at-e modireh*), elected on 17 December 1966, over a year before its official registration, for a period of four years. The statute of Ershad, clearly stipulated that members of the Board of Directors were chosen by the founders.⁶ Homaun was president of the Board; Motahhari, vice-president; Minachi, treasurer; Seyyed Ali Shahcheraghi and Mohammad Taqi Ja'fari were alternate members on the board.⁷ Furthermore, the fact that according to Ershad's statute all financial obligations, cheques and promisory notes had to bear the signature of both Homaun as the president and Minachi as the treasurer, indicated that real power was in their hands. Aliabadi's name among the founding members of the organization gave it considerable prestige and legitimacy since Aliabadi was a reputable jurist, a professor of law at Tehran University and a one-time chief prosecutor of Tehran. Having lent his name to the organization, however, Aliabadi avoided getting involved in its everyday affairs.

Legally, the clerical partners of Ershad had honorary and insignificant decision-making positions and the fact that the founding members did not include any clerics permanently tilted the scales of power in favour of the non-clerics. Motahhari's position as vice-president was eye-catching, yet it had no real weight. According to Minachi, at the time of drafting the statute, Motahhari accepted this position on the Board of Directors and did not press to become a founding member because he knew that he had not done anything substantial to deserve it.⁸ Administratively, however, Motahhari was responsible for selecting and inviting speakers as well as for publications. Shahcheraghi, who was an alternate member of the Board, was also appointed as *imam-e jama'at* or the cleric who led the prayers at Ershad. Ja'fari, the second alternate member, was not given any official position and remained a consultant. Prepared for an eventual disagreement among the members of the Board, Ershad's statute stipulated that in such circumstances, the decision of the president of the founding committee would determine the

outcome.⁹ This clause enabled Homaun to become the final arbiter in the disagreements that surfaced later.

The purpose of Ershad, according to its statute, was to build a mosque and a lecture hall for the propagation of Islamic principles and objectives. Among its other stated aims were the founding of Islamic research and educational centres, the provision of health services, the undertaking of economic activities to ensure the survival and continued operation of the institution, the publication of religious books, newspapers and magazines, the establishment of charitable activities and finally aiding other educational and Islamic institutions.¹⁰ In Ershad's statute it is clearly and categorically stated that the institution would not interfere in political matters.¹¹

The name Hosseiniyeh Ershad encapsulated the dual if not contradictory character of the institution. The term Hosseiniyeh echoed a concern for old religious rituals and practices, while *ershad*, or guidance, implied an enlightened rupture with the past. A *hosseiniyeh* is simply a religious location where Shi'ites congregate to mourn the martyrdom of Imam Hossein and his family. In this sense, the name of the institution was similar to the hundreds of *hosseiniyehs* spread all over Iran. It served to indicate that Ershad intended to become a popular religious place. However, whereas believers in traditional Hosseiniyehs re-lived the past and soothed themselves by shedding tears over a thirteen-century old event without any reflection or thought, Ershad was to guide the believers back to the source of their faith, interpret its historical evolution and explain its meaning and role in the modern world. Hosseiniyeh Ershad was to be the intellectual torch which would lead believers out of their obscurantism to a modern, applicable and liberating Islam.

Soon letters were sent out to both clerics and lay speakers inviting them to lecture at Ershad. Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati was among the first to receive such a letter. At this time, Ali Shari'ati, who had just returned from Paris with his family, lived at his father's home in Mashhad. The Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths in Mashhad had suspended its activities and Mohammad-Taqi had been in retirement since November of 1962. According to Mohammad-Taqi, initially some thought had been given to calling the new institution the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths, but the idea was dropped because of the political connotations of association with the Centre. He recalled that in a letter, Motahhari informed him of a new religious institution in Tehran which was to operate on the same model as that of the Centre.¹² Together with the Board of Directors, Motahhari officially invited Mohammad-Taqi to deliver a series of lectures at Ershad over a ten-day period.¹³ Accepting the invitation, Mohammad-Taqi started his lectures in the winter of 1964. Motahhari later recalled that at the time Mohammad-Taqi was retired and lived off a 1,000 toman a month pension so the invitation was also a means of helping him financially.¹⁴ Mohammad-Taqi's collaboration with Hosseiniyeh Ershad, however, turned out to be more than temporary. After a few months, he moved to Tehran, where he initially lived with his youngest daughter.

Batul and his sister and where he later took a new wife, Khadijeh Ma'sumi.¹⁵ He lectured at Ershad for some four years, and became an influential figure there. In the mourning month of Moharram 1385, which coincided with September 1965, twenty consecutive evening lectures were organized at Ershad. One of the main speakers was Mohammad-Taqi who discoursed on the topic of the caliphate and the institution of imamate. Later, Motahhari referred to this lectures series as the real beginning of Ershad's activities.¹⁶

The Second Phase

Ershad's new phase, which began in 1967, was marked by three important events. First, its 1,000-square meter main building was finally finished. The Board of Directors planned its official inauguration with a series of ceremonies and lectures by distinguished clerical and non-clerical figures in the holy month of Ramadan which coincided with December 1967. Also commemorating the beginning of the fifteenth century of Mohammad's Prophethood, Motahhari decided to engage Ershad in the publication of a series of scholarly articles on the Prophet. The inauguration ceremonies and lectures have been described as 'unprecedented and magnificent'.¹⁷ Their star was Fakhreddin Hejazi, whose fiery style of preaching and passionate lectures attracted a great deal of attention.

By the autumn of 1967, Ali Shari'ati, who had been teaching at Mashhad University for a year and had been invited to deliver lectures at a few universities around Iran including Tehran's Melli University, was gaining a reputation as an Islamic modernist whose lectures were very well received by the young. After Mohammad-Taqi moved from Mashhad, Ali would visit his father at Ershad whenever he was in Tehran. Motahhari, who had known Ali before he left for Paris, was impressed by the young Western-educated Islamist. The two had also engaged in discussions and exchanged opinions on various topics. Shari'ati recalled their discussion of the design on the front cover of Motahhari's book, *Ensan va sarnevesht* (Man and Destiny). Motahhari had at first found it too abstract, but he had taken a liking to it once Shari'ati had explained that it expressed the ambiguity which was the essence of destiny.¹⁸

Motahhari later invited Shari'ati to contribute an article to a book he planned to edit and that Ershad was to finance. In a flattering letter, dated 22 October 1967, he explained his project to Ali.¹⁹ The proposed book was to include a number of articles on the Prophet. The three most important covered the Prophets' life, from birth to prophethood, from prophethood to *hejira*, and from the *hejira* to his death. The first two parts were to be written by Seyyed Ja'far Shahidi, a well-established Islamic scholar. Shari'ati was invited to write the article on the life of the Prophet from *hejira* to death. Motahhari's gracious proposal at the time was in the tradition of scholars promoting a rising talent.

The topic was not at all alien to Shari'ati who had covered it exhaustively in his lectures at Mashhad University during the academic year of 1966–67. The chronological part of the article Shari'ati subsequently wrote in response to this invitation was essentially an abridged version of these lectures. The first part was an innovative attempt on Shari'ati's part to present a modern and worldly definition of *hejira* and the Prophet's historical act. In addition, however, Shari'ati sent Motahhari a second unsolicited article called the 'Profile of Mohammad'. This article was a complete reproduction of the last section of one of his lecture courses from which he had deleted a two-page section on Buddhism, Confucianism and Manichaeism.

The poetic style, graceful flow and novel message of both articles greatly impressed Motahhari. It was, however, the second which truly moved him. According to Seyyed Ali Khamen'i, Motahhari enjoyed the 'Profile of Mohammad' so much that he re-read it three times.²⁰ The novelty of Shari'ati's work as compared to his contemporaries was the ease with which he moved across different religions and concepts, reinterpreting traditional concepts and synthesizing what he believed to be correct. He did not confine himself to the unimaginative wooden tongue of his colleagues. In a domain long dominated by traditionalists, Shari'ati's words and colleagues were fresh and even his clerical readers appreciated the change. Reflecting his gnostic mood at the time, in the closing paragraph of his article, Shari'ati described the task of authentic intellectuals as that of 'founding the civilization of Europe in India and infusing the material body of Europe with Indian gnosticism, taking the soul of the East to the West and bringing the reality of the West to the East.' He supported his plea for a reciprocal relation between the East and the West by condemning the unilateral relation that had hitherto existed and concluded by reproducing his favourite statement by Fanon which rejected the blind imitation of everything European and called for the creation of a 'new idea', a 'new race' and a 'new human being'.²¹

Shari'ati had authorized Motahhari to edit his articles.²² But Motahhari was so thrilled with them that he published both in their entirety. In his article on the life of Mohammad from Prophethood to the *hejira*, Shari'ati experimented with his concept of the 'degrees of significance of words'. He was redefining and enlivening a dead term, *hejira*. From a traditionalist's point of view, this modernist and unprecedented reinterpretation of *hejira* was a *bid'at* or unacceptable innovation which contradicted the *sunnat* and even bordered on heresy. At this time, Motahhari was neither offended by Shari'ati's methodology nor the innovative and even revisionist content of his articles. He did not oppose his class analysis of religions or his characterization of the prophets of Abrahamic religions as representatives and defenders of the cause of the oppressed. He did not even amend Shari'ati's account of how the Prophet had tacitly approved Abu Bakr's role as the leader of public prayers just before his death.²³ On the contrary it seems as though at this time the small group of modernist and politicized clergy appreciated Shari'ati introduction of radical sociological and political ideas and methods into the analysis of Islam. Later, however, Motahhari gradually took issue with both the content

and methodology of Shari'ati's analysis.

The first volume of the book, *Mohammad, The Last of Prophets*, appeared in September of 1968. In the meantime, Motahhari, elated by his discovery of Ali Shari'ati's talent, asked him to speak at Ershad in a series of lectures organized to mark the 15th century of Mohammad's Prophethood, for which the book was prepared. Shari'ati thus delivered his first talk at Hosseiniyeh Ershad on the evening of 25 October 1968 and his topic was 'Nasl-e now-e Mosalman' or 'The new Islamic generation'.²⁴ This was the beginning of a fruitful yet tumultuous relationship between Shari'ati and Hosseiniyeh Ershad. It is important to realize that Shari'ati entered into an Ershad which was already strife-ridden and that a series of rivalries, completely unrelated to Shari'ati, would reach a boiling point less than three months after his first lecture.

The Hejazi Affair

Just as Shari'ati was being welcomed into Ershad with open arms, the star of another fiery non-clerical speaker, who had made considerable waves there, was rapidly fading. Fakhreddin Hejazi, who was from Khorasan, had begun his collaboration with Ershad in 1966 on Motahhari's invitation and by 1967 was a regular speaker.²⁵ Soon his inflammatory and rhetorical style became popular, especially among the youth, attracting larger and larger crowds. In 1967, Hejazi was invited to speak on ten consecutive nights during Ramazan when a lecture he delivered on Abu Taleb was so moving and emotional that Motahhari was brought to tears.²⁶ Hejazi's programmes were so successful that he was also invited to participate in the *haj* ceremonies that were organized by Ershad.

Hejazi's increasing popularity at Ershad gradually made him a target of criticism. The traditional clergy looked upon him as a dangerous rival whose oratory was stealing their audience and undermining their authority and influence. The members of a Mashhadi lobby group referred to Hejazi's pro-regime articles, accused him of personal impropriety and contested his political credentials, questioning his relationship with Astan-e Qods-e Razavi, the powerful government organization which administered all receipts from Imam Reza's endowments in Khorasan.²⁷ As pressure was brought to bear on Motahhari to terminate Hejazi's collaboration with Ershad, he too began to question the role of his former protégé and finally came to the decision that he must go. Minachi, however, was against Hejazi's expulsion. Ershad's Board of Directors was thus faced with its first crisis, one which pitted Motahhari the cleric against Minachi, the layman, for the effective control of Ershad.

While Motahhari was seeking to put an end to Hejazi's presence at Ershad, Hejazi had submitted an article entitled 'The World-view of the Prophet' for the volume that Motahhari was editing. With the exception of Motahhari, all members of the board which reviewed the articles for publication, voted in favour of

Hejazi's article.²⁸ Motahhari, however, took a firm stand and declared that if the article was to be published he would terminate his cooperation with Ershad. Under substantial pressure from Motahhari and against their better judgement, the members of the review board rejected Hejazi's article.

Feeling certain that, with the presence and influence of his own hand-picked Consultative Board – Navid, Haj Baba, Zomorodian, Haj Tarkhani and Haj Ahmadi – he would be able to obtain his more important demands, Motahhari combined his anti-Hejazi campaign with a much broader attack on Minachi. On 17 January 1969, he wrote a letter to Homayun, the president of Ershad's Board announcing his resignation and adding: 'please consider my resignation as irreversible'.²⁹ Homayun refused to accept the resignation and immediately informed Motahhari of his decision. Two days after the first categorical letter, Motahhari agreed to attend the meetings of the Board of Directors and the Consultative Board.³⁰ Furthermore he outlined the reasons for his resignation and put forward the conditions for its retraction.

Motahhari's grievances centred around the person of Minachi who he accused of being a deceitful sensationalist who had monopolized all decision making powers,³¹ of belittling those who Motahhari had invited to speak at Ershad and of steering Ershad towards closer ties with government institutions. In another copy of his resignation, Motahhari referred to another and probably the real reason for his discontent with the course of events at Ershad. 'The first time that I realized *Minachi's* ill intentions,' he wrote 'was in his draft of the statute [of Ershad] which was founded on one leg.'³² Clearly Motahhari was referring to the fact that the clergy, specifically himself, were not included among the founding members. Presenting the conditions for the retraction of his resignation, Motahhari demanded an end to the interference and meddling of *Minachi* and his 'gang' in the 'propaganda', 'research' and 'administrative' units of Ershad; the revocation of Mr ... membership and the irrevocable expulsion of *Hejazi* from Hosseiniyeh Ershad.³³ Motahhari further demanded full control of the propaganda and research unit for four years and the uncontested right to choose and employ all his colleagues. He also demanded that the administrative unit should coordinate itself with his programmes.³⁴

Homayun, who trusted Minachi and considered his active presence as necessary for the efficient running of Ershad, did not concede to Motahhari's sweeping demands. At the same time, he did not want Motahhari to leave Ershad because it was his reputation that had attracted modernist clerical and non-clerical speakers. Since the Hejazi affair had brought everything to a head, Hejazi himself had to be sacrificed. Motahhari's grievances in terms of the internal management of Ershad were relegated to the re-drafting of the internal by-laws and his purviews in the propaganda and research units, over which he was effectively given management were substantially enhanced. These concessions temporarily diffused the crisis. Motahhari's campaign, however, did not succeed in dislodging Minachi from his position of power and the feeling of distrust between these two powerful adversaries

continued to simmer under the surface.

With the departure of Hejazi and the help of his enhanced personal power base, Motahhari sought the active participation of his clerical colleagues. He wanted to prove to Homa'yun that his management of the speakers, would make Ershad a highly reputable and popular Islamic centre.

Shari'ati's First Taste of Ershad

From his very first lecture at Ershad on 25 October 1968, Ali Shari'ati's appearance and performance made an impact. Ali Davani, a clerical speaker at the Hosseiniyeh, recalled that Shari'ati's first lecture attracted far bigger crowds than his or Motahhari's.³⁵ Aware of the effect of Shari'ati's 'superb oratory and verbal skills', Motahhari recognised that he was needed to win over and attract the youth.³⁶ At the same time, Motahhari had to appease his clerical colleagues who demanded respect and social status yet had lost their edge to modernist non-clerical preachers. This attempt to appease the two irreconcilable sides proved difficult if not impossible and while Motahhari's heart was probably with the modernist non-clerics, his garb and natural habitat belonged to the clerics.

After his first lectures at Ershad, Shari'ati wrote a revealing letter to Abdol-Ali Bazargan, Mehdi Bazargan's son, expressing his astonishment at the fact that 'against his own will and against all odds' he had become a preacher at a hosseiniyeh.³⁷ He participated, Shari'ati wrote, because he firmly believed in Motahhari and could not refuse his request. Shari'ati informed Abdol-Ali Bazargan that even though he had been invited to return to Ershad during Ramazan (10–15 December 1968) he had hesitated until he read the announcement publicizing the lectures at Hosseiniyeh Ershad in the daily Kayhan. He was furious at the order in which the speakers were arranged in the printed announcement. Once again he found himself caught in petty rivalries and jealousies similar to those he had experienced in student politics during his stay in Paris. This time, however, it was clerical politics. Ershad's announcement specified that Motahhari would speak on the topic of 'Divine Justice' (*adl-e elahi*) from 8 in the evening. It added that Shari'ati and Katira'i would also speak, after which Shahcheraghi would lead the prayers.³⁸ Shari'ati had been given the impression that he would be the main speaker during one of the five nights between 19 and 24 Ramazan, and had discovered, to his surprise, that he was announced as an adjunct speaker. He was not, in other words, deemed significant enough to be the main speaker and his function was simply to 'warm up' the crowd. Believing that he was intentionally dropped from the list of main speakers, he accused the clergy of narrow mindedness: 'I am not of their type, neither would the asses who are their disciples allow me to ride them, nor am I the type who wishes to ride asses. I was their guest on whose presence they had insisted a thousand times'.³⁹

Shari'ati confided his dilemma to Abdol-Ali Bazargan as a means of getting

something off his chest. Even though he felt insulted by Ershad's announcement, he did not want to categorically turn down their invitation because to do so might have seemed disrespectful towards Motahhari. In addition, he believed that participating in Ershad was the correct course of action, and that he was thus obliged to swallow his pride. In his letter, Shari'ati also thanked Abdol-Ali Bazargan for his letter to him. In that letter, Bazargan had informed Shari'ati that his lecture on 'Existentialism' at Melli University in Tehran which Abdol-Ali Bazargan had organized was a success and the students had very much appreciated it. Thrilled with the news, he wrote, 'it is evident that my lectures are understood and appreciated by university students. Those who go to traditional religious gatherings (*takiyyeh*) are not my customers. I feel more distant from them than from enlightened atheists'.⁴⁰ Even though the letter gave no clear indication of his plans, Ali Shari'ati finally decided to turn down Ershad's invitation. One day after the first announcement in Kayhan, Ershad announced that Hassan Rohani and Katira'i would be Motahhari's adjunct speakers and there was no further mention of Shari'ati.⁴¹ The daily *Ettela'at*, published the news under the title of 'a small change in programme at Ershad'.⁴²

On 7 February 1969, less than two months after Shari'ati had declined the invitation to lecture at Ershad, Mehdi Bazargan wrote to him asking him to give a talk at the Islamic Association of Engineers.⁴³ Bazargan intended to revive the activities of this association – a political front functioning under the pretext of religious activities – which he had founded but which had become dormant during his imprisonment. In his letter, he suggested that Shari'ati should talk on *bey'at* or compliance and acceptance. The text of Bazargan's letter has not been made public, but through Shari'ati's response to it one can guess its content. Bazargan had clearly praised Shari'ati and, alluding to the letter that Shari'ati had written to his son Abdol-Ali, chided him for his refusal of Ershad's second invitation, which, he seems to have suggested, was somehow rooted in 'expediency' and a sense of 'self-preservation'.

Shari'ati received Mehdi Bazargan's letter on 18 February 1969 and replied immediately.⁴⁴ Thanking him for his kind words he tried to exonerate himself of what he believed to be Bazargan's criticisms. He argued that he had never allowed his own interests to intervene with his beliefs and ideals. He complained that he was offended by the 'vice' of 'expediency and self-preservation' attributed to him. Yet he reiterated his feeling that the announcement in Kayhan was an insult which he believed to be a ploy on the part of the clergy, especially 'Falsafi's gang', to humiliate him and Katira'i, another layman. The real reason for his absence at Ershad during Ramazan was, he maintained, the simple fact that he had fallen sick.

On the issue of his talk at the Islamic Association of Engineers, Shari'ati openly enquired whether he would be able to present novel ideas, explanations and interpretations on the issue of *bey'at*, in which case he would readily accept. However, he added that if he was to be confined to what he called the unacceptable Shi'i framework of analysis based on the rejection of *ijma'* or consensus, he would not

be able to lecture because he did not believe in it. 'My view on the matter,' he wrote, is neither Shi'i nor Sunni, it is either both or neither'.⁴⁵

Acknowledging his deep respect for Bazargan, Shari'ati humbly added that as his true teacher, in the spiritual and religious sense of the word, Bazargan could always make any unilateral decision on his behalf and Shari'ati would willingly obey.⁴⁶ Once assured by Bazargan that he could present his own interpretations, Shari'ati kept his promise and lectured on 'Bey'at va Vesayyat (Democracy va Rahbariye Enqelabi)' or 'Democracy and Revolutionary Leadership' at the Islamic Association of Engineers in Tehran. Complying with Bazargan's instruction and in an attempt to appease Motahhari, who had tried to convince him that the announcement in Kayhan was an inadvertent mix-up, Shari'ati returned to Ershad. His second series of lectures began on 6 March 1969. In his talk, 'Ali a mythical reality', Shari'ati mentioned that he had been 'ordered to speak at Ershad for two nights'.⁴⁷ When, on the last day of March 1969, Shari'ati returned to Ershad for four consecutive nights, the content of his lecture had a distinctly different tone and emphasis. His long lecture, 'Ummat va emmam dar jame'shenasi (The Islamic community and religious leadership from a sociological perspective)', which continued through all four sessions, was the first of his many politically-charged speeches delivered from this platform.

In 'The Islamic community and religious leadership', Shari'ati embarked on his long journey of providing a dynamic, radical and highly politicized reinterpretation and redefinition of classical Islamic concepts. In a socio-political environment characterized by silence, fear and self-censorship among the politically conscious, his public discourse was an act of intransigence. He invited his audience, which was packed into the main lecture-hall of Ershad, to participate in his grand Islamic project. 'Islam,' he told them in his distinctive voice, was both 'an ideology and a social revolution which intended to construct a classless and free society on the basis of equality and justice and in which would live enlightened, responsible and free people'.⁴⁸ His ideas and terminology aroused and caught the attention of the youth among his audience, who had never before heard such concepts from a presumably religious preacher. As if speaking in a political democracy, Shari'ati openly discussed the most suitable political form of preparing and cultivating a 'revolutionary society' in which citizens steeped in revolutionary ideology would experience political and intellectual maturity. During this revolutionary transitional period, Shari'ati argued, society had to be governed by a political system of 'guided democracy' or *démocratie dirigée*. This concept is a euphemism for a benevolent dictatorship. The mission of this 'guided democracy' was to construct an ideal society 'as it ought to be'. It was to transform the 'institutions, social relations, culture, ethic, outlook, tastes, wants and values of society on the basis of a "revolutionary doctrine" and a "reformist ideology"'.⁴⁹ On the issue of who was to lead the 'guided democracy', Shari'ati argued that it had to be an ideal type, a perfect human being and the maximum and uncontested leader. The Islamic term for such a person, he argued, was imam.⁵⁰ To be an imam, 'is an innate right

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which is the consequence of the imam himself ... whether he is elected or not, appointed or not, he will be the Imam, since he has all the virtues of being an imam. It is immaterial if he becomes the choice of all members of society or that of only a few'.⁵¹ The leader of the Islamic community during the period of 'guided democracy', is neither in need of the people's consent, nor is he, as a result, responsible to them. He is guided by the vision of a perfect society and equipped with a maximum programme based on a revolutionary Islamic ideology.

Echoing the condescending view of representative democracy which prevailed among revolutionaries in the 1960s, Shari'ati argued that as long as the masses in underdeveloped and poor countries remained 'ignorant, slave-like and decadent' an enlightened revolutionary leadership was necessary to effect the transformation of society's old modes of thought and its defunct ways.⁵² Representative democracy, he argued, would be counter-revolutionary and incapable of promoting the revolutionary changes that were required to free these countries and their people from the vicious circle of underdevelopment and poverty. In a democracy, ignorant and reactionary masses would vote for conservative and reactionary leaders and policies. Seeking international justification for his position, he referred to the Bandung Conference of the non-aligned nations in 1955 and the questioning of the merits of representative democracy at it. From a practical point of view, Shari'ati argued that a dictatorship was a political system which would not change its ways by anyone's promptings. Therefore, he concluded that it would only change by force.⁵³ Using a Leninist rationale against political democracy, he argued that the classes who endured the real burden of oppression and exploitation did not have the patience for free elections and a pluralist democracy, which were the objective of affluent liberal intellectuals.⁵⁴ Shari'ati's theoretical analysis, similar to that of most other revolutionaries of his time, was not a purely anti-democratic position. He argued that a democracy, in which people would vote and thereby take their destiny in their own hands, would become the desirable political system once society reached a certain level of political awareness and consciousness.⁵⁵ The particulars of when and how the revolutionary transitional stage gives way to the democratic phase were not discussed.

Shari'ati's 'The Islamic community and religious leadership' can be considered as one of his most revolutionary lectures in which he clearly outlined the necessity of confronting dictatorship with force. From another perspective it was an attempt by Shari'ati to explain his previous controversial position on the democratic character of Abu Bakr's election as the first caliph. In his article published in *Mohammad, the Last of the Prophets*, Shari'ati's reference to the election as an example of Western democracy and proof of the fact that it had rendered the people independent of the Prophet's intervention in their political life, had raised many objections from clerical quarters. By stressing the concepts of *showra*, or council, and *ijma'*, or consensus, as democratic institutions and customs in Islam, Shari'ati had undermined the Shi'i concept of *vasayat* or succession, on the basis of which Shi'ites considered Ali to be the first rightful caliph. Shari'ati's two stage political

system for underdeveloped countries, provided him with an outlet through which he could redeem himself from the 'mistake' of having eulogized democratic elections, which had denied Ali his claim to become the first caliph. Shari'ati argued that during the transitional revolutionary period, which he considered to have started after the death of the Prophet, society should have been governed on the basis of a 'guided democracy' and ruled by an imam who had to be a perfect human being and an ideal role model. Only the Prophet knew who that man was, which is why he had proclaimed Ali as his successor. So Shari'ati concluded that *vesayat* or succession was the just philosophy of a specific transitional and revolutionary period.⁵⁶ Had the companions of the Prophet accepted Ali, according to the will of the Prophet, as their first caliph, after a few generations, society would have been prepared for democracy based on *showra* or councils. Claiming both succession and democracy to be equally Islamic, Shari'ati reconciled and modified his previous statements. He argued that democracy was an ideal and desirable system of government but if it were practised at the wrong historical period it would prove disastrous as was the case of Abu Bakr's election, leading to the rejection of the real revolutionary leader, Ali. The two-stage model, reinterpreted and adapted to the history of Islam should have satisfied both the Shi'i clergy and the revolutionary left. The clergy saw in it the vindication of their theory of *vesayat*, whereas the revolutionary left viewed it as a justification of their theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat or the labouring classes. It was not surprising that the speech became very popular. Shari'ati delivered seven lectures between the months of March and May. After his seventh lecture 'Motemadden va motejaded' (Civilized and modern) on 9 May 1968, he was forced to be absent from Ershad for nearly seven months.

Just as Shari'ati was delivering his speech 'Civilized and Modern' to his huge audience at Ershad, Bahrami, the head of Mashhad's SAVAK, was writing a report on him to the central office of SAVAK in Tehran. The report was dispatched on 10 May 1968, and in it Bahrami indicated that Shari'ati's 'good intentions' had not yet been proven.⁵⁷ In response a memo signed by Moqadam prohibited Shari'ati from accepting any more invitations to lecture outside the University of Mashhad pending further investigations.⁵⁸ He was informed of this decision on his arrival from Tehran, when he was summoned to Mashhad's SAVAK for an interview with Bahrami.⁵⁹ One of the main charges against his speeches at the time was that they were becoming too popular and attracting very large audiences. In the statement Shari'ati had to write for SAVAK clarifying and explaining his position, he complained that it had been the increasing popularity and not the content of his lectures that had been construed as anti-governmental.⁶⁰ SAVAK, however, was not quite so naive; it was becoming sensitive both to the popularity and the content of Shari'ati's speeches and needed to be convinced that their long-run benefits would compensate for any short-run damage. Naturally Shari'ati's pre-scheduled lectures at the University of Tehran and Ershad were subsequently cancelled. It was not until 7 October 1969 and after a long period of haggling and negotiations that

Mashhad's SAVAK was informed by Moqadam that 'under surveillance' Shari'ati could resume his guest lectures.⁶¹ After this conditional clearance, Shari'ati informed Ershad that he was once again allowed to give public lectures. To an official inquiry from Hosseiniyeh Ershad about Ali Shari'ati's status, SAVAK responded in a memo dated 9 November 1969 announcing that it was not opposed to Shari'ati lecturing at Ershad.⁶²

After the publication of *Mohammad the Last of the Prophets*, Shari'ati's articles, especially 'From hejira to death' created considerable commotion among the traditional clergy. The first voices of criticism against certain passages, among them those of Seyyeds Morteza Jazayeri and Lankarani, were raised only a few months after the publication of the volume, in September 1968. Soon a slanderous five-page pamphlet called 'Ershad's letter of Introduction', said to have been written, duplicated and distributed by Seyyed Sadreddin Jazayeri and his son, Seyyed Morteza, was circulated.⁶³ The pamphlet attacked the founders, the speakers and the institution of Ershad in a general manner, yet Shari'ati's assertions were singled out and assailed specifically. The major bone of contention between Shari'ati and his vociferous adversaries centred around the former's revisionist presentation of certain historical and religious incidents. From an ardent Shi'i perspective the questioning or reinterpretation of certain key Shi'i concepts or account of events was tantamount to apostasy. Such key issues were usually related to cases of dispute between Shi'is and Sunnis that dated back to the time of the Prophet and his successors. The pamphlet singled out four examples of what it considered to be Shari'ati's outrageous assertions. It argued that such contentions were only aimed at 'the annihilation and destruction' of Islam.

It lashed out, first of all, at Shari'ati's account of the Prophet's reaction, just before his death, to the congregational prayers led by Abu Bakr. According to the sources used by Shari'ati, the Prophet was satisfied and content at the sight of Abu Bakr leading the prayers. This account outraged zealous Shi'ites since it seemed to imply that the Prophet's satisfaction with Abu Bakr as the leader of the public prayers was an affirmation of his legitimacy as the first caliph. Secondly, the pamphlet referred to a passage in which Shari'ati gave a positive picture of both Abu Bakr and Omar. Shari'ati characterized Abu Bakr as 'one of the most influential figures among the people' and 'a very close friend of Mohammad'. Omar was described as 'a man of principles, inflexible in the application of justice'.⁶⁴ The traditional clergy considered such accounts as too favourable to individuals who in popular Shi'i culture were considered as unjust usurpers of Ali's position and therefore the most despised enemies of Shi'is. Third, Shari'ati's reference to the election of the caliphs as an example of Western democracy and proof of the fact that it rendered the people independent of the Prophet's intervention in their political life, seemed as a vindication of the elections on Shari'ati's part. Once again, the traditional clergy believed that Ali was appointed by the Prophet to succeed him and that the elections were a ruse to deny him his rightful position. Finally, the pamphlet referred to a passage in which Shari'ati had listed the nobility in

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Mohammad's entourage who could succeed the Prophet. The list started with Abu Bakr and ended with Ali.⁶⁵ From the ordering of the names, the authors concluded that in the eyes of Shari'ati, Abu Bakr's status and position was uppermost while Ali's was last.⁶⁶ The pamphlet asserted that the real problem with Hosseiniyeh Ershad was not that it 'propagated Wahabbi and Sunni ideas', 'attacked the principles of Shi'ism' or 'propagated certain corrupt practices such as playing music and encouraging the free mingling of opposite sexes', but that it 'promoted all kinds of irreligiousness'.⁶⁷ Hosseiniyeh Ershad was dubbed as 'Yazidiyeh-e Ezlal' by its antagonists – a term said to have been coined by Seyyed Morteza Jazayeri. Yazidiyeh, which rhymed with Hosseiniyeh, meant the abode of Yazid the murderer of Hossein. Ezlal, which somehow rhymed with Ershad meant evil and wrongdoing. From the point of view of its clerical enemies, Hosseiniyeh Ershad was not a Shi'ite centre for the guidance of the people but an irreligious base which propagated evil and anti-Shi'ism. Very soon it became evident that the traditional clergy would not tolerate any intellectual reinterpretation of what they believed to be the eternal teachings of the Shi'i faith as they had learnt it through generations.

Motahhari's reaction to such clerical invectives and criticism, which soon found their echo among the traditionalists in the bazaar was firm. Among his inner circle, he defended Shari'ati's assertions. On the most sensitive and controversial issue of Abu Bakr's leading of prayers, before the Prophet's death, Motahhari sincerely and passionately defended Shari'ati's writings in the presence of friends.⁶⁸ In response to messages that bordered on threats in terms of issuing a *fatwa* against Ershad, Motahhari tried to convince his conservative clerical colleagues that the situation was under control. When Aqa Mirza Abol-Hassan Rafi'i sent word that things that were being said about Ershad might oblige him to take a religious stand, Motahhari responded that he too had studied philosophy and *fiqh* or the science of religion and that he was being very vigilant.⁶⁹

In the face of mounting anti-Ershad and anti-Shari'ati propaganda, Motahhari set out to counter the rumours and charges of Wahabbism and Sunnism. He wrote an introduction to the second volume of 'Mohammad, the last of the Prophets', which was partly a rebuttal to Shari'ati's critics, in which he made certain 'necessary and useful' observations.⁷⁰ The introduction, however, was to be signed by Hosseiniyeh Ershad and not Motahhari, and so the Board of Directors had to make the final decision on its content. On 13 July 1969, two months after Shari'ati had been barred from public lecturing, the members of the board decided that it would be more suitable for an explanatory introduction to appear in the second printing of the first volume of 'Mohammad the last of the Prophets', but that it would be more appropriate for Shari'ati himself to clarify the issues and provide counter arguments to the criticisms.

The day after this decision was taken, Motahhari wrote a kind letter to Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati explaining the course of events in detail and referring to those who had criticized Ali Shari'ati's article as 'simpletons and malicious' characters who had made a 'lot of noise'.⁷¹ To quell the opposition, Motahhari requested

Ali Shari'ati to write a few explanatory words on the controversial issues raised by his opponents and in case he concurred with Motahhari's comments he suggested that Shari'ati could refer to or touch on some of the points he had raised.⁷² In conclusion, Motahhari added that the final decision belonged to Shari'ati and that if something was to be written it had to be short and fast so that it could be prepared in time for publication.

Motahhari's prompting came right in the middle of Shari'ati's long bouts of depression and his tug of war with SAVAK. Already dejected by the ban on his public speaking, he was also having to come to terms with the flood of criticism from the clergy. The impassioned criticism of what he had thought was a highly laudable account of Mohammad surprised and hurt him. Feeling the walls closing in on him from all sides, he was utterly forlorn. He realized that he had become the prey both of the Iranian security services defending the political status quo, and the clergy safeguarding the existing religious order. He felt like an unwanted foreigner in his own country with no one to turn to but himself. In this introverted mood he shut out everything that would exert emotional pressure on him. His reaction was a long and heavy silence, similar to the one imposed on him by the state. Shari'ati turned off his receptors to all possible outside signals. He could, and did, play deaf, dumb and mute to all those whom he did not wish to be addressed by and in relation to all those subjects he did not wish to talk about. In Motahhari's case it was not the person whom he disliked but the issue which had come to involve them. Instead of defending himself against allegations that he knew were unfounded, he took a vow of silence. The more he was urged to explain, clarify, justify and even retract his controversial assertions the less he showed any sign of compliance. His reaction was construed as arrogant stonewalling by his detractors.

In a letter to Hossein Razmju, his old classmate at the University of Mashhad, Shari'ati explained his state of mind and his anxieties. Razmju who had greatly appreciated Shari'ati's *Eslamshenasi*, had written to him on 10 April 1968 describing it as one of the most beautifully written and distinguished studies in Islamology and the history of religions, a most eminent and unique human epic.⁷³ After the wave of denunciations, Razmju's letter was a pleasant surprise and a breath of fresh air. Confiding in him, Shari'ati lamented the times in which he lived. Alluding to the clergy, he wrote, 'goodwill and receptiveness towards novel ideas by newcomers' is a rarity while 'malice, envy, misapprehension and the desire to contradict, villify, humiliate and incriminate abounds'.⁷⁴

Shari'ati acknowledged that his ears were so full of criticisms and invectives that had he not been so callous he would have become disheartened and abandoned his objectives. Characterizing the environment which he lived in as a 'dark, frightful and dangerous night', Shari'ati conceded that he expected no one to listen to what he said nor read what he wrote, let alone respond appreciatively. He maintained that his wailing and ululation was an uncontrollable jet of molten lava that erupted from inside him.⁷⁵ Mocking the traditional clergy, he wrote, 'this

community is neither in need of my words nor even in need of Ali's or even God's, for they have their [own works of reference] *Bahar al-Anwar* and *Kahl al-Basar*.⁷⁶ After thanking Razmju for his very kind words, Shari'ati summed up his existential problem at the time and wrote, 'loneliness in the midst of the masses and feeling like a stranger in one's own country are truly injurious pains'.⁷⁷

Shari'ati's resistance to modify his controversial views let alone retracting them eventually became an important source of disagreement between he and Motahhari. While for Motahhari a disclaimer or a few words of modification would have disarmed Ershad's and Shari'ati's critics and calmed down the rage of the clergy, for Shari'ati any modification of his views was construed as engaging in *taqiyyeh* or dissimulation, a habit for which he always criticized the traditional clergy. As a reformer, Shari'ati could neither agree with the positions of the traditional clergy nor comply with their demands to join in their choruses. As Shari'ati's invitation to tolerance and dialogue instead of war or conformity fell on deaf ears, the traditional clergy heightened their criticism. It was not until December 1969 that Shari'ati was once again allowed to resume his lectures at Ershad.

The Return to Ershad

After seven months of forced absence, on 2 December 1969, Shari'ati started his new lecture series at Ershad with a speech on Imam Ali. His topic during the three consecutive nights that he spoke at Ershad was not incidental. Shari'ati was responding to his clerical critics who presented him as an anti-Ali Wahhabi. In his lecture, 'Ali is alone', Shari'ati explained that Shi'i Muslims adored Ali without really knowing him or his true human qualities. Ali's solitude, Shari'ati argued, was the result of his preoccupation with his Beloved and the spiritual distance between him and the ordinary people. Ali was alone because he was a stranger among his own people. Shari'ati argued that the more one reaches the stage of spiritual perfection, the lonelier one comes to feel.⁷⁸ The similarity between Shari'ati's account of Imam Ali's solitude in his lecture at Ershad and his own solitude as reflected in his letter to Razmju leads one to believe that the title of his lecture, 'Ali is alone', was a direct reference to Imam Ali and also an indirect reference to another Ali, whose authentic following of Imam Ali, he implied, had led him to the same predicament.

Shari'ati lectured at Ershad four more times during the month of December. His first lecture, which lasted two nights was originally entitled, 'Ali ensan-e tamam' or 'Ali the complete human being'. Throughout his two lectures, Shari'ati got so carried away with defining what he meant by a complete human being that he was forced to end his speech without having made the connection with Ali. His second lecture, 'Mohajerat va tamadon' or 'Migration and civilization' was essentially an elaboration of the significance of the concept of migration that he had already developed in his article on 'Mohammad, from hejira to death'. A marked difference

between Shari'ati's speeches after his first ban by SAVAK and his highly politicized lectures on 'The Islamic community and religious leadership' before the ban, was the absence of direct political references to concepts such as revolution, revolutionary movement, revolutionary leadership, revolutionary ideology and a revolutionary party.

It was during December 1969 that Ershad invited Shari'ati to accompany its group to the *haj*. The invitation meant that Ershad would accept all the financial responsibilities of Shari'ati's trip. It is said that aside from fulfilling an important religious obligation, the group sent by Ershad also pursued certain political objectives. According to Minachi, the Students' Association of Europe and America had insisted on Ali's trip to Mecca. The representatives of the Students' Association wished to confer with Shari'ati over their relations with the liberation movements in general and the Palestinian organizations in particular.⁷⁹ The problem with sending Shari'ati on the trip was that subsequent to his problems with SAVAK, a ban had been issued by Mashhad's SAVAK on Shari'ati leaving Khorasan's legal jurisdiction. It is said that had it not been for the mediation of Haj Mahmud Manian, who was an influential businessman and a National Front sympathizer, Shari'ati would not have been given permission to go to the *haj*.⁸⁰ Shari'ati was also obliged to obtain permission from the University of Mashhad for his absence during the winter term. According to Matini, dean of the Faculty of Literature at the time, government employees were allowed a single leave of absence for the *haj*.⁸¹ The university officials, therefore, did not oppose his request for a leave of absence and on 9 February 1970, Shari'ati along with Motahhari, Minachi and Seyyed Golestan Sa'idi accompanied the Ershad group to Mecca. According to Minachi, during their trip, they met with Palestinian representatives and a group of Iranian students from Germany, with whom they discussed political issues. On 19 March 1970, after an absence of three months from Hosseiniyeh Ershad, for a good part of which he was in Mecca, Shari'ati lectured on 'Mey'ad ba Ebrahim' or 'Meeting Abraham' during four consecutive nights.

Even though Shari'ati announced that the subject of his lectures was going to be on 'his observations about the *haj*', he spent the first night explaining the real meaning and significance of Abraham's act of smashing the idols. To understand Islam, Shari'ati argued, one has to understand Abraham's 'religious movement'.⁸² Abraham's anti-idolatrous movement, Shari'ati argued, was not a movement against the multiplicity of idols and statues in Mecca, but was in reality the first historical movement against a class, race and status-differentiated society. The multiplicity of statues was the symbolic expression of a class-ridden and discriminatory society. Each statue or idol was the expression of one class, race, or social status. Idolatry, Shari'ati announced, was the religious and philosophical justification of such discriminatory and unjust societies. The 'deceitful custodians of religion' who have historically justified and rationalized the stratified and unjust status quo, Shari'ati proclaimed were the true 'idolaters'.⁸³ At the beginning of his speech, Shari'ati provided a classically Marxian account of the emergence of class society from the

primitive communal society. Having explained the role of coercion and force in the process of primitive appropriation of surplus, Shari'ati argued that the economic system based on private property and exploitation could not have been maintained without convincing both the exploiters and the exploited that the system was either a 'natural' or 'God-ordained' order. The task of rendering the unjust status quo as a natural state of affairs, according to Shari'ati, was left to philosophers and men of religion, who took advantage of the pure religious sympathies of the people.⁸⁴

On the second night of his lecture, Shari'ati declared that 'a religion of idol-worshipping and polytheism' was thus created by those who were dependent on the ruling and monied classes to vindicate the exploitative, unjust and discriminatory economic system which had come into existence after specialization and the division of labour.⁸⁵ The sociological significance of Abraham's movement, Shari'ati declared, was its war against class discrimination and its attempt to create a classless society, which was the true objective of a monotheistic religion. Shari'ati, thus reinterpreted polytheism as a socio-economic system based on class exploitation and monotheism as a socio-economic system based on a classless society. Shari'ati posited that Abraham's love and awareness allowed him to rebel against historical determinism. The absence of objective conditions, Shari'ati argued, did not discharge Abraham from his individual human responsibility, which was to stand up and combat 'racial and class discrimination'.⁸⁶ Abraham's movement was thus categorized as an everlastingly relevant cause and the *haj* as an exercise which reminded Muslims of their liberating socio-religious responsibility.

On the last day of his lecture, Shari'ati shared the secret of his wording with his audience. As if certain that no one outside the intimate circle of the initiated would be present on the second night of New Year, Shari'ati exposed his symbolic manner of speech. 'Here I have no choice but to employ commonly used words and expressions, yet these everyday words do not have the same "plain and everyday meaning" in my indirect diction'.⁸⁷ Shari'ati informed his audience that they would have to reinterpret his words and look for the hidden meaning of his expressions to understand his symbolic and coded messages. He said, 'I will use the words in one story to tell you a different story'.⁸⁸ Referring to Imam Hossein's decision to interrupt the rites of the *haj* ceremony to wage *jihad* against Yazid, Shari'ati declared that performing religious rites and rituals was only meaningful in a society which was oriented towards the right direction.⁸⁹ Shari'ati implied that in a society such as Iran where polytheistic values prevailed, performing religious rites was futile and all ceremonies were best interrupted for waging *jihad* against the polytheistic status quo.

He summed up his *haj* experience in terms of three principles. First, 'linking-up' with one's cultural and religious past by visiting its source and identifying with the objectives of the ever-continuous Abrahamic movement. Second, 'congregating' as independent individuals, ordinary people and not the chosen ones. Finally 'migrating' with the purpose of 'establishing equality and justice on earth'.⁹⁰

Migration, Shari'ati maintained, necessitated rising from one's corner of the world and reaching the house of God or moving from one's intellectual position towards the divinely ordained one. Alluding to social uprising and insurrection as the final stage of the Abrahamic movement, Shari'ati said, here, the word rising (*pa shodan*) has also a 'parallel meaning'.⁹¹

The last three nights of Shari'ati's lecture on 'Meeting Abraham', happened to fall on the night of the Iranian New Year (1349) and subsequently its first and second nights. On such nights Iranian families usually celebrate the New Year by visiting immediate family and very close friends. The occasion is a private one, celebrated among close family and friends. Traditionally on such nights one does not attend a public event be it cultural, artistic or sportive. Yet during the nights of Shari'ati's speech, Hosseiniyeh Ershad witnessed a breach of traditional customs as the multitudes of young men and women crowded into Ershad's main lecture hall that could hold up to 1,700 people. Surprised at the bulging audience, Shari'ati thanked them for coming to Ershad in spite of the 'strong and colourful alternative attractions'.⁹²

The pitch and content of Shari'ati's speech was once again militant and contentious. It seemed as if Shari'ati had quickly forgotten the seven months ban on his public speaking and the grief and pain that it had caused him. As if inspired by his own description of Abraham's single-handed and bold rebellion against all polytheistic elements, Shari'ati escalated his tone not only against the unjustifiable and exploiting economic system based on private property but also against the clergy. He pointed a very accusing finger at them as apologists of the wrongful status quo and *inter alia*, the shah's regime. Lashing out at common Shi'ite opinions, formed and upheld by the clergy, Shari'ati derided those who believed in 'tombs, golden sepulchres and gold-plated domes' and poked fun at 'statue-lovers' and 'those who mourned and wept for those whom they did not even know'.⁹³

As the targets of Shari'ati's magnetic speeches became clearer, his criticisms sharper and his conclusions more impassioned, his popularity increased by leaps and bounds. Ershad, as Shari'ati's base in Tehran, also gained in fame. An apparently bashful and softspoken young man who seemed easily manageable and readily brought back into ranks by a few reproachful words of high religious dignitaries, proved to be an unyielding, individualistic and charismatic speaker who sought no one's official support and survived on the ever-increasing admiration and adulation of his young audience. Following his righteous, solitary yet socially conscious and responsible role-models – Abraham, Ali and Abu Zarr – Ali Shari'ati took it upon himself to preach from Ershad what he believed to be the 'Truth'.

17

Ershad

'Now a faith and a movement'

For both Shari'ati and Hosseiniyeh Ershad 1349, the Iranian year that ran from 21 March 1970 to 21 March 1971 was tumultuous. In the face of Shari'ati's growing popularity, Ershad's Board of Directors invited him to deliver more lectures. By this time, however, Motahhari's circle had effectively gained control of the institution's 'propaganda' activities. Apart from Motahhari himself – who spoke a minimum of four, and sometimes up to eight nights a month – most of the Ershad lectures were delivered by his close clerical friends, men like Nasser Makarem-Shirazi, Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani and Mohammad Beheshti who had just returned from a period of study in Germany. While it is true that some of the younger members of Motahhari's group tried to use a more contemporary language in their exposition of Islamic ideas, their lectures did not have the same appeal as those of Shari'ati.

Although Motahhari had been prompting him since the summer of 1969, Shari'ati had still made no attempt to respond to his clerical detractors. Just as he had turned a blind eye to the suggestions of well-wishers that he should respond to, and calm down the polemical wrangling that his lectures at the University of Mashhad and his book, *Eslamshenasi* had caused, Shari'ati, in his usual manner, listened carefully to the counsel he was offered, but continued to ignore the issue. His writings and speeches after the appearance of his two articles in *Mohammad the Last of the Prophets* had further infuriated the clergy and added to already existing tensions. Gradually, Motahhari's friends joined the anti-Shari'ati chorus with Mohammad-Taqi Falsafi – a fiery clerical preacher who, in spite of his enigmatic political positions, was highly respected by the mainstream clergy – taking issue with some of Shari'ati's controversial Islamic interpretations and denouncing him from the pulpit.¹

Shari'ati's intransigence over both his religious positions and his politicized lectures had two simultaneous consequences which paved the way for an ultimate showdown within Ershad. For the young people who flocked to his lectures, his words symbolized the battle-cry of justice against the representatives of the 'evil' status quo. Among the up-and-coming intelligentsia, who felt crushed by the fearful

weight of the political atmosphere of their country, Shari'ati's poignant words fell on receptive ears. His defiant ideas and intransigent voice were gradually becoming an indispensable source of intellectual nourishment and he was rapidly acquiring the status of a hero. But the very same characteristics that endeared him to the younger generation alienated the pragmatic speakers at Ershad as well as those members of the clergy who felt as though they were becoming the target of his attacks.

On the surface, the relationship between Shari'ati, Ershad and Motahhari appeared smooth and cordial during the Iranian year of 1349. During the first six months of the year Shari'ati lectured seven times. One of these lectures – 'Eqbal the reformer of this century' – was part of a series commemorating Allameh Mohammad Eqbal Lahuri. The last, on 'The history of philosophy in Islam', was delivered on 23 August 1970. After this Shari'ati did not speak again at Ershad again until 9 April 1971 – the first month of the Iranian year 1350. His relatively long absence was due to an internal political struggle within Ershad's Board of Directors. Trouble was already brewing in the early months of 1970 and it reached a climax in the autumn over Shari'ati's increasingly militant lectures.

A Disturbing Iconoclast

Shari'ati's lecture on 'Eqbal, the reformer of this century' was a watershed in the development of his thought. Since his return to Iran he had been deeply influenced by gnosticism, and this lecture reconciled two seemingly contradictory tendencies and currents both within himself and in Islam. He was attracted to and had consistently oscillated between politics which implied an active social life, and gnosticism which required the abandonment of people. Now he declared that true Islam was a synthesis of both. It was in this period that he replaced the classical Sufi concept of self-annihilation and subsequent assimilation or living in God with self-annihilation and subsequent assimilation or living in the people. The path from gnosticism to political activism, a path along which Shari'ati treks backwards and forwards more than once in his life, is once again traversed.

Through Eqbal, Shari'ati came to realize that Islam was not a 'one dimensional' religion – neither purely political nor purely gnostic. It was concerned both with the affairs of the Hereafter and those of this world. 'Islamic culture', Shari'ati declared, was not only 'spiritual, ethical and metaphysical', but also 'social, political, ethical and responsibility-generating'.² The greatest and most revolutionary contribution of Islam to human history was that it channelled the

... power of religious love and the miraculous force of gnostic feelings, which had always existed within individuals, guided them towards revolution, sacrifice, the welcoming of death and martyrdom and towards the attainment of power to create a human society based on justice and dedicated to material and spiritual progress in this world.³

Shari'ati thus singled out the main responsibility of Islam as a worldly one. True Islam, he maintained, was an un mutilated multidimensional synthesis, the 20th-century representative of which was Eqbal. In Eqbal, the Western-educated Muslim philosopher, mystical poet, lover of Mowlavi, political militant, anti-colonialist, Islamic revolutionary and reformer, Shari'ati saw his own image. As if talking to himself and reproaching himself for his state of mind since his return to Iran in 1964, Shari'ati told his mesmerized audience, that Eqbal was not a one-dimensional person and had never allowed his love for Mowlavi to become an obsession with gnosticism.⁴ Rejoicing in his moment of clarity, he declared that actually-existing Islam was nothing but a 'dismembered' and 'disintegrated' religion, isolated and imprisoned within narrow un-Islamic and metamorphosed ideas.⁵ This opiate-like religion, which had killed Islamic society in the name of Islam and had kept the people in a state of resignation, bondage and religious degradation, Shari'ati concluded, was in need of a 'renaissance' through 'ideological struggle'.⁶

Shari'ati's ideological struggle was intended against the Islam of 'inert' and 'reactionary' *ulema*, or the learned men of Islamic jurisprudence. With these custodians and proponents of Islam gathered in the *howzehha-ye elmiyeh*, or traditional seminary schools, Shari'ati declared, 'one cannot struggle against colonialism and resist the onslaught of colonial culture, Western philosophy and civilization.'⁷ Repeating the notion that Islam does not possess an institutionalized clerical organization (*rowhaniyat*), he nevertheless acknowledged that the clergy had not signed any concessionary treaties with imperialistic powers.⁸ Yet he did not envisage an active or meaningful role for them in the ideological struggle he proposed. For the first time from the pulpit of Ershad, Shari'ati lashed out against his clerical detractors, accusing them of being 'incapable of comprehending his arguments and even inept at reading his writings'.⁹ In a condescending, yet non-hostile tone, he told his Westernized intellectual opponents not to confuse Iran's social reality with their wishful thinking. Since 'our intellectuals are against religion,' he observed, 'they think that society is also against religion.'¹⁰ He continued in a half-caustic vein: 'I as an intellectual should not forget that I do not live in twentieth century France or nineteenth century Germany but in Mashhad, Tehran or Esfahan.'¹¹ Shari'ati explained his mission as a responsible intellectual and concluded, 'our slumbering and reactionary society is now in need of reformers such as Eqbal and Seyyed Jamal Asadabadi.'¹²

Even though Motahhari attended the lectures on Eqbal, the *velayati* clerics (those who considered themselves staunch supporters of Ali and his house) criticized the series. To them Eqbal was guilty of heresy (*zendigh*) and an enemy of the 'house of Ali'. He was also denounced for having directly insulted Imam Ja'far Sadeq in one of his poems. The organizers of the series were reprimanded for having praised a Sunni who had insulted the Imam.¹³ The wrath of the *velayati* clerics was essentially rooted in their opposition to any deviation from a traditional exposition of Islam, let alone a modernist interpretation in which the entire *raison d'être* of the

traditional clergy was questioned. Later, it was demonstrated that the alleged 'insulting poem', had nothing to do with Imam Ja'far Sadeq, but was a reference to two Indians by the name of Sadeq and Ja'far who were involved in contemporary Indian politics.¹⁴

Three months after he spoke on Eqbal, on 23 August 1970, Shari'ati returned to Ershad to deliver, over two nights, a scathing lecture, 'Religion against Religion'. In it he officially declared war on the traditional custodians of Shi'ism. Claiming that history had been the arena of continuous wars between religions, he made a distinction between two types of religions. One he called 'monotheistic', the religion championed by the prophets of the Abrahamic religions. The other was 'polytheistic', which in the name of upholding religion, had always challenged and struggled against the monotheistic religions. Shari'ati asserted that polytheistic religions often laid claim to the mantle of monotheistic religions, deceiving the people and delaying the triumph of monotheistic religions. He distinguished between false polytheistic and true monotheistic religions on the basis of the pivotal issue of their position in relation to the status quo. Polytheism was characterized as a creed that propagated acquiescence, while monotheism was defined as a revolutionary creed based on defiance.

Monotheistic religions, Shari'ati argued, had a spiritual aspect based on the belief in one God, and a material and worldly aspect representing human unity or oneness. Since human beings were the creatures of a single God, Shari'ati argued that they must be of the same kind and of equal value. From a sociological point of view, therefore, monotheism represented the belief in the unity of humanity irrespective of race and class.¹⁵ Monotheism's invitation to obedience towards God was also an invitation to rebellion against any authority or rule other than God. Monotheism was thus a 'revolutionary religion' which pressed upon its adherents to 'change and destroy whatever they found to be false and unacceptable.'¹⁶ Alluding to the unacceptable, Shari'ati called for 'the radical transformation of the existing state of affairs and its replacement with an order characterized by justice, equity and equality.'¹⁷

Historically polytheistic religions abused religion to justify an unjust status quo characterized by the poverty, destitution and subjugation of the many and the wealth and power of a few. Polytheistic religions represented the 'oppressors, enemies of progress, justice, truth, freedom, and civilization.'¹⁸ Shari'ati called the polytheists, hiding behind the mask of monotheism, dangerous deceivers of the people. Polytheistic religions, he claimed, had 'distorted all religious principles' to convince the people that their condition and fortune in life was the will of God and a function of their pre-determined fate.¹⁹ Concurring with Westernized intellectuals who called this religion, 'the opium of the masses' Shari'ati added that it was founded on ignorance, fear, discrimination and property relations characteristic of the feudal era.²⁰

Attacking the conservative clergy, Shari'ati exposed their hypocrisy according to his newly defined criteria. The traditional symbols of piety such as the practi

of Islamic rites and rituals and even the waging of *jihad*, he maintained, did not constitute necessary and sufficient criteria for regarding them as monotheistic. Accusing the *ulema* of following a polytheistic religion, Shari'ati declared war on the Shi'i religious establishment. Speaking about a different kind of Islam, he warned that 'his Islam' was not the one that had reigned during the past, on the contrary, it intended to destroy the polytheistic religion that had governed societies throughout history.²¹ The challenge of Shari'ati's provocative re-definition of monotheistic religions defied not just the authority of Shi'ite clergy but that of all religious establishments acquiescing with the status quo. Shari'ati ended his lectures by invoking the words of his symbol of monotheistic Islam, Abu Zarr, who had said, 'I am amazed at he who cannot find a morsel in his home and does not rebel against the people with his bare sword.'²² He rhetorically asked his audience why Abu Zarr spoke about rebelling against the people and answered provocatively, 'all people are directly responsible for my hunger'.²³

A week later, on 31 August 1970, Shari'ati lectured on 'The intellectual and his responsibility'. Having delivered one of his most incisive attacks against the clergy, he now tried to moderate and balance his discourse by attacking the advocates of modernism and secular enlightenment. Distinguishing between authentic and false intellectuals, he claimed that the findings, statements and positions of Western intellectuals, were rooted in the real problems of their own society and were thus authentic. Third World intellectuals, including Iranians, he claimed, were false duplicates who simply regurgitated the words of their Western models, whose problems were by no means similar to those of Third World citizens.²⁴ The Eastern intellectual, as a distorted image and echo of the Western intellectual, Shari'ati declared, was ignorant of his own socio-cultural environment and alien to his own people, their customs and traditions.²⁵ The authentic Third World intellectual was characterized by the ability to formulate novel ideas concerning a sense of the time and epoch, a knowledge of people, and an acceptance of responsibility.²⁶

The medicine that might cure the ills of Western societies was certainly not appropriate to the problems of the Third World. Shari'ati argued that whereas the Western intellectuals' struggle against 'clerical despotism' led to 'freedom of thought, intellectual blossoming, a brilliant civilization and unprecedented advances in science', the same act in Islamic societies led to the immediate removal of the only 'barrier that existed against the penetration of imperialism, economic exploitation and the onslaught of deviationist and corrupt ideas'.²⁷ It seemed as if against the attacks of Westernized intellectuals on 'clerical despotism', Shari'ati was closing ranks behind the clergy. As a Muslim, he allowed himself to criticize the clergy; unbelievers, however, did not have the same rights. Shari'ati lamented that in the name of the struggle against superstition, reaction and the worship of tradition assimilé intellectuals were destroying Iran's culture, spirituality and religion.²⁸ Shari'ati, the Muslim rebel, wished to assure the survival of Islam by uprooting what he believed to be the harmful and suffocating organisms that had come to live on it. Yet he would not allow 'outsiders' or secular intellectuals who confused

harmful growths with the healthy soul to threaten the entire corpus.

At the end of his lecture, Shari'ati alluded to an unidentified writer 'who says that we should not imitate the West, should stand on our own feet and should return to ourselves.' But even this 'person' is 'an imitation',²⁹ an assimilé who for the past seven or eight years had been playing with the idea of anti-Westoxication. He continued in an aggressive tone: 'you are ignorant about the West, Westoxication and the East, it is just since a couple of articles by Fanon and Césaire have been translated and have become fashionable that you have come to learn about these concepts'.³⁰

Ten days later the reputable intellectual weekly *Ferdowsi* responded to Shari'ati's attack. In a short column it described his lecture, as a 'great deal of nonsense' and a 'concoction of strange and unique ideas'. Rather patronisingly it beseeched Shari'ati, 'not to deal with ideas which surpassed his intellectual capacity'.³¹ The journal conveniently assumed that Shari'ati had been talking about the late Jalal Al-e Ahmad. But this was not the case. On the contrary, his writings at the time of Al-e Ahmad's death almost a year earlier demonstrate the extent of Shari'ati's attachment to this famous writer. He had also consistently praised Al-e Ahmad as an authentic Iranian intellectual and included him in his list of 'pioneers of "the return to oneself" in the Third World' along with Fanon and Césaire. At that time there were others in Iran who toyed with the ideas of Westoxication and authenticity. In particular, there was one vocal intellectual, working within the establishment, who regretted the fact that Iranians should 'beg from foreigners what they themselves possessed'. This person, whom Shari'ati disliked, was most probably the target of his attack. By aggrandizing the incident, *Ferdowsi* tried to reduce Shari'ati's attack on Westernized Iranian intellectuals, to a crude personal attack. *Ferdowsi*, an important bastion of modernist and secular intellectuals, did not enter into a debate or a dialogue with Shari'ati on his classification and definition of intellectuals, preferring instead to brush him aside as an insolent intellectual lightweight.

The Backlash

While the established intellectual community dismissed him as inconsequential, the clerical institution was becoming evermore sensitive to Shari'ati's attacks and insinuations. In the name of Islam, Shari'ati was openly attacking two main pillars of the Iranian society. His unveiled criticisms were aimed at the clergy as the guardians of a polytheistic, pacifying, reactionary and oppressive Islam. And he lashed out at the political, economic and cultural institutions and foundations of the shah's regime, calling for justice, freedom and equality attained through the institution of a revolutionary monotheistic Islam. His popular lectures were disquieting to those at Ershad who believed their role to be cultural and religious. Motahhari, for one, was deeply convinced that Ershad's mission was to become a scholarly

institution similar to al-Azhar. He therefore believed that Ershad should avoid involvement in politics and fostering ties with students.³² The issue of Motahhari's continuing personal power struggle with Minachi also added to the tension which gradually came to reign over Ershad. The fact that Motahhari felt as though Minachi and Shari'ati were combining forces against him complicated the situation and led to a confusion of issues. Feeling that he was losing his domination over Ershad, Motahhari came to blame Minachi and Shari'ati, each for a different reason.

According to Davani, it was during 1970, probably in early spring, that he heard Motahhari complain about Shari'ati and the situation at Ershad. During a luncheon at his home in Qolhak, Motahhari referred to the considerable anti-Shari'ati and anti-Ershad sentiments that Shari'ati's articles and his book, *Eslamshenasi* had caused. Motahhari regretted that his attempts to calm the situation had proved futile and his recommendations to Shari'ati were ignored. As a result, control of the situation was slipping out of Motahhari's hands.³³ On the same day, Motahhari along with Hasheminejad and Davani visited Ayatollah Qomi, exiled in Karaj, in the hope of soliciting his mediation. Qomi knew both Mohammad-Taqi and Ali Shari'ati.

On their arrival, Motahhari who was both 'excited and distressed' explained the situation to the ayatollah. He exclaimed that he had tried very hard to bring Ershad under his own control so that it would not fall into unfriendly hands. Labelling Shari'ati as 'too much of an extremist', whose lectures and writings had provided his opponents with the best of pretexts, Motahhari expressed his anxiety over the disturbing rumours about Ershad and its consequences.³⁴ Elaborating on his major problem, Motahhari asserted that Shari'ati was uncontrollable, stubborn and impervious to council and recommendations.³⁵ The young people, he admitted, were more attracted to Shari'ati than the clerical speakers at Ershad. Fearful of losing him, Motahhari believed that Shari'ati's continued involvement at Ershad had also antagonized the majority of the clergy. Caught between the two, Motahhari informed Qomi that if the situation did not change for the better, all their efforts at Ershad would prove counter-productive and backfire.³⁶ Seeking a way out of the deadlock, he pleaded with Qomi to talk to and advise both Shari'ati and the clergy. Given the situation, Motahhari also requested the ayatollah's judicious opinion on the extent of his own future involvement with Ershad. Qomi agreed to see and advise Shari'ati on the condition that he was prepared to come and visit him. He also advised Motahhari to speak with Shari'ati for one last time and if he refused to listen, Qomi suggested that Motahhari should continue at Ershad and Shari'ati be asked to leave. Raising doubts about Shari'ati's willingness to meet the ayatollah or even listen to him, Motahhari, however, placed the blame on certain friends of Shari'ati at Ershad who, he suggested opposed the presence of Motahhari and his collaborators at the Hosseiniyeh. Despite the existing pressing problems, Motahhari promised to do his best to resolve them, yet he told the ayatollah that if his attempts failed he would quit.³⁷

The account of another close friend of Motahhari's corroborates Davani's chronicle of some of the underlying causes of the dispute between Motahhari and the management of Ershad. According to Seyyed Ali Khamene'i, trouble between Motahhari and Minachi began in 1970. Minachi, who had been chosen as the managing director of Ershad, had effectively taken over all responsibilities including the selection of speakers and final decisions on publications. Motahhari had, thereby, been denied any real voice in the running of the Hosseiniyeh.³⁸ Khamene'i maintained that Motahhari's dissatisfaction stemmed from the belief that, while he had been one of the founders of Ershad which people associated with him and the clergy, he was not informed about 'who was to speak', 'what was to be said' or when the books planned by Ershad would be published.³⁹ As disagreements and quarrels escalated, Motahhari objected to and challenged the day to day operations at Ershad.⁴⁰ Khamene'i does not make any direct references to Shari'ati as the source of the disputes, as Davani does. Yet in his chronological account of events, he demonstrates that problems surfaced after Shari'ati's increasing presence at Ershad. The key issue of the selection of speakers and the content of the lectures is clearly a reference to Shari'ati's role. In the summer of 1970, according to Khamene'i, two lengthy meetings, each lasting for four to five hours, were convened in Mashhad in the presence of Motahhari, Khamene'i, Mohammad-Taqi and Ali Shari'ati. At these meetings the problems of Hosseiniyeh were discussed.⁴¹

From the accounts of those close to Motahhari and his own notes it is clear that Motahhari wished to see radical changes in the administrative and power structure of Ershad. As he had told Ayatollah Qomi, Motahhari sought to assure his own hegemony through the expansion of the three-man (excluding the alternates) Board of Directors to a five-man Board and the creation of a newly appointed Clerical Council.⁴² He also pressed hard to reduce Minachi's administrative powers to those of a financial manager, closely supervised by what he called an 'honest accountant'.⁴³ The attainment of these objectives would have meant the ousting of Minachi and the domination of Motahhari over the affairs of Ershad. The problems of 'who should speak' and 'what should be said', which related to Shari'ati, would have been automatically resolved once the Clerical Council came to yield absolute power.

The question of Shari'ati's eligibility as a speaker suddenly became a pivotal issue in the power struggle at Ershad. Motahhari seemed to have chosen the wrong terrain on which to wage his battle. What began as an attempt to purge Shari'ati and all individuals whose credentials were not approved by Motahhari's circle of clerical friends from Ershad's pulpit, backfired. The final outcome, however, had very little to do with Shari'ati's manoeuvrings. It was primarily Minachi, and ultimately Homayun who had called the shots.

The Struggle for Ershad

The attempt to muzzle Shari'ati began in the long deliberations of a series of meetings of the Board of Directors and a number of other 'friends' of Ershad. The group was composed of Abolfazl Zanjani, Motahhari, Beheshti, Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Bahonar, Musavi-Ardabili, Homaun, Manuchehr Salur and Minachi. The single item on the agenda was to look into the rumours about Ershad, analyse the condemnations against Shari'ati and prepare an official response to the antagonists of both Ershad and Shari'ati. Over five meetings, each lasting some two to three hours, the minutes of which have not been made public, discussion rapidly gravitated towards the establishment of proper criteria for speakers at Ershad.⁴⁴ The original purpose of the nine-man committee, drafting a formal rebuttal to the clerical opponents of Ershad and Shari'ati, was suddenly transformed into the establishment of 'proper' standards, for speakers at Ershad.

The idea of constituting a 'Board for the Establishment of Standards' (*hey'at-e ta'yin-e zavabet*), empowered to examine, approve and reject the credentials of speakers at Ershad is said to have come from Motahhari's friends. The board was to be composed of clerical associates of Motahhari, since it was argued that only the clergy were qualified to review the credentials of those who were going to speak at a religious institution. Such a move would have achieved two important objectives. First, anyone who was not to the liking of the clergy would have been excluded from Ershad. Second, control over the selection of speakers would have been wrested from Minachi.

The nine-man group composed of clerics and non-clerics, effectively came to perform the basic task of the Board for the Establishment of Standards, promulgating a set of standards for the speakers. The job of establishing the specifics was left to the clerical members of the committee. After deliberations, their final list included ten particular items related to the topics of Islamic education and training, practical loyalty of the individual and his immediate family to Islamic customs, physical appearance and personal conduct. Speakers were required to submit their lectures prior to public delivery to a 'Review Committee', that was to be established. Having drafted the standards of eligibility, the clerical members pressed for its immediate adoption and application.⁴⁵

Shari'ati's lack of formal religious training, the non-traditional religious content of his speeches and questions about his appearance as well as his and the immediate members of his family's practical loyalty to Islamic customs were the hurdles which would have immediately disqualified him as a speaker. Alarmed at the implication of ratifying the standards of eligibility, Homaun and Minachi gave their conditional approval but argued that if the 'standards' were to result in the exclusion of Shari'ati, they would strongly oppose them. The clerical members of the committee, on the other hand, pressed for their rigorous, uncompromising and universal application, which meant the effective ousting of Shari'ati. An acceptable compromise could not be found and, unwilling to alienate their clerical

colleagues, the two strong men of Ershad, Homaun and Minachi, who could have ultimately imposed their will, did not take any immediate measures. After having heard the standards and criteria, Homaun had jested that the clerical members of the committee should have also excluded bald people from speaking at Ershad.

Shari'ati's seven months absence from Ershad between 23 August 1970 and 9 April 1971, was the result of this deadlock; which seemed a victory for Motahhari. But Minachi all the while continued his attempts to return Shari'ati. On October 4, 1970, he wrote to the Chancellor of the University of Mashhad, informing him of Shari'ati's successful lectures at Ershad and formally requesting the university to allow Shari'ati to participate more regularly at Ershad's programmes.⁴⁶

Responding to what he had indirectly heard about the reasons for his forced absence and the developments at Ershad, Shari'ati wrote a caustic letter to Minachi and Homaun. Referring to the 'strict standards and criteria' adopted by the committee, Shari'ati quipped that the cards were stacked such that only the immaculate and the truly pious, namely the clergy, could guide the masses at Ershad.⁴⁷ Explaining his involvement with Ershad, Shari'ati wrote that after returning from Europe and sensing the changes in the social and intellectual conditions of the country, he realized that he could no longer pursue the 'constructive, quiet, profound and secretive type of work that he had always believed in'.⁴⁸ Confronted with two options, he could either lead an easy-going and trouble-free life by becoming a well-established academic at the university, or, he could 'shout every once in while reminding himself of the pains he felt'.⁴⁹ The first choice would have made him respectable to all, including what he labelled as 'the post-June 1967 Zionist Ayatollahs and *velayat*-loving mullahs'.⁵⁰ Even though on the heels of the second choice, which he made, followed all kinds of accusations and abuse from friends rather than enemies, Shari'ati claimed that he continued to speak at Ershad. Presenting two reasons for his perseverance, Shari'ati wrote that first, there was nothing else he could do and second, he wished to get an insight into the pre-occupations and reactions of the new generation.

In his letter, Shari'ati expressed his views on the decision of the Board to exclude him from speaking at Ershad. Shari'ati demanded a simple clarification; had he been eliminated from Ershad because of his conduct as a person or because of his thoughts. Claiming that he was quite content with not speaking at Ershad, Shari'ati immediately set out to demonstrate why the eligibility standards set by the committee could not be applied to him. He asserted that he should not be considered as a 'religious speaker', let alone one of the main speakers at Ershad.⁵¹ Implicitly suggesting that certain programmes at Ershad could be educational rather than religious, he hinted that as an educator he should not be judged by the standards of religious speakers. Excluding himself from the rank of religious speakers and categorizing himself as a teacher and a specialist at Ershad, Shari'ati was effectively suggesting a way out of the stand-off.

Unable to hide his disappointment and anger at his arbitrary exclusion, Shari'ati exclaimed that he had spent his youth between the two barren deserts of 'mullahs

and modernists'. Seeking the message of each, he claimed to have learnt that the doctrinaire clergy turned people into donkeys (*estehmar*) and the worldly people exploited them. He, therefore, ran away from both. Shari'ati ended his letter with an allegory and wrote that after his trials, having heard of a spring in the desert, he turned towards it only to find that 'the elders who considered themselves the successors of the tradition of Abraham and the guardians of Ka'ba had converted Ka'ba into a house for idol-worshipping'.⁵²

Shari'ati's sweet and sour letter to the strong-men of Ershad must have made an important impression on them. Yet his predicament had become part and parcel of the greater battle between the clergy and layman for complete control. For the founders of Ershad, accepting the exclusion of Shari'ati meant also accepting the standards determined by the clergy legitimized in an all-powerful Clerical Council.⁵³ As the term for the existing Board of Directors was coming to an end, Motahhari was waiting to implement his agenda through a new Board of Directors.⁵⁴ From January 1971, Motahhari chose to gradually decrease his participation at Ershad and opted for a wait and see posture. Between the end of November 1970 and the end of February 1971, the internal problems at Ershad led to a noticeable lull in its regular activities. Reducing his own lectures during the months of Dey, Bahman and Esfand, Motahhari, however, did not leave the field to 'unfriendly strangers'. The speakers during this period were essentially members of his own circle. The non-clerical speakers allowed during this period were dignitaries with a considerable background of traditional Islamic studies, such as Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati and Zaryab Kho'i.

An Unexpected Reinstatement

As a part of his sulking act, Motahhari might have made the fatal error of refusing to accompany the regular Ershad group to the *haj* of 1970–71. Shari'ati, who had accompanied the group the year before, was no longer entitled to time off from his teaching at the university. During the winter of 1970, while Shari'ati was still excluded, a few members of Ershad's Board of Directors went to Mashhad and pleaded with the Chancellor of Mashhad University, Abdollah Faryar, to agree to give Shari'ati time off so that he could accompany them on the *haj*. In the face of their insistence, Faryar is said to have given Shari'ati permission to take a second leave of absence.⁵⁵ It is evident that between 20 January and 20 February, when Shari'ati was not delivering his usual speeches along every step of the *haj*, he and Minachi had sufficient time to discuss alternatives to Motahhari's demands.

The point raised by Shari'ati in his letter to Minachi and Homayun on his own re-categorization as a teacher rather than a religious speaker, provided an excellent pretext to the non-clerical directors of Ershad. They could neutralize the adverse effect of the standards on Shari'ati, without directly undermining the authority or decision of the clerical members of the nine-man committee. Arguing

that specialized educational programmes fell under a completely different rubric from the regular religious programmes, it was contended that the speakers at the educational programmes were also exempt from the eligibility conditions set by the committee. The launching of an academic year-long series of classes at Ershad taught by Shari'ati, would have returned him to Ershad, allowed the clergy to save face and foiled their attempt at gaining absolute control over Ershad.

In a sensational declaration made on the night of 23 Esfand 1349 (14 March 1971) Ershad was to become a 'center for Islamology on a world scale'.⁵⁶ This ambitious project was based on expanding the library, research and publication facilities at Ershad and the introduction of a novel quasi-academic program at the university level. The centerpiece of this phase was a modern and scholarly presentation and analysis of Islam, especially Shi'ite Islam. Ali Shari'ati was invited to teach the first series of courses on the History of Religions, Sociology of Religion and Islamology. The courses were to be held bi-weekly for two and a half hours on Friday afternoons and were declared open to all university students of social sciences. Students could start registration immediately for courses to begin on 20 Farvardin 1350 (9 April 1971). It was also announced that female students would be segregated from male students. Both Motahhari and Beheshti, who were among the audience at Ershad's main lecture hall, left in protest after the declaration was read.⁵⁷ The unexpected announcement of this dazzling project impressed the regulars at Ershad; but more important, it confronted Motahhari and his friends with a fait accompli. It was in this respect that Motahhari characterized the events that occurred in Ershad during the last two weeks of Esfand as a *coup d'état*.⁵⁸

According to Minachi, after the announcement of Shari'ati's academic programme, an agreement was reached with Motahhari on dividing the two main activities at Ershad.⁵⁹ Motahhari agreed to head the research activities, while the responsibility for educational activities was given to Shari'ati.⁶⁰ Even though the division of labour may have been based on Motahhari's consent, his letter to the Board of Directors and the Consultative Committee clearly indicates that he was indignant at the new turn of events. Motahhari maintained that it was not until the night of Ashura, a few days before the 'blitzkrieg' that he realized what had been decided behind his back. Also informed that the issue of successors to the Founding Members, the rapid appointment of which he had pressed for, had been decided without his knowledge and against his interest, Motahhari accused Ershad management of 'ignominy if not treason'.⁶¹ He considered Shari'ati's classes to be a violation of the decisions of the Committee for the Establishment of Standards and the Consultative Committee.⁶² Despite the fact that his lectures at Ershad on the two extremely significant nights of Ashura and Tasu'a were previously announced and advertised, Motahhari demonstrated his fury by a sudden decision not to speak, hoping that his much remarked absence would foil the pending 'coup'.

On the very same night Shari'ati, completely in the dark over these new developments, mourned his fate. In a work supposedly written on this night and entitled 'It was the night of Ashura of 1349 and what a painful night it was', he told the

story of his shattered dreams and aspirations. All alone, confined to his room in Mashhad, he believed that he had become a 'victim of expediency'. Unaware of what was going on in Tehran, he complained that those he considered to be his friends were effectively sacrificing him to those who insulted and spread rumours about him. His martyrdom at the hands of his friends, Shari'ati maintained, satisfied his enemies, acquitted his friends and resolved the problem that had been created.⁶³ In his melodramatic style, Shari'ati drew a parallel between his own destiny, that of the Iranian people and Imam Hossein.⁶⁴ Through grieving Imam Hossein's martyrdom people mourned their own tragedy, demanded their usurped rights and wept over their trampled pride. Shari'ati described the pain and degradation of these living martyrs who suppressed their desire to revolt. For them he said, life was a continuous tragedy, every corner of the world was Karbala, every month of the year was Moharram and every day of the month Ashura.⁶⁵ Identifying himself as a martyr, Shari'ati argued that Ashura was the ever-recurring story of all those persecuted for their quest to seek 'justice and equality of classes and races'.⁶⁶

From his own assessment of the situation at the time, it is evident that Shari'ati did not believe he had any chance of returning to Ershad. Shari'ati evaluated his situation at Ershad in a poetical and macabre fashion. 'The sky was dark, the night was black, obscurity reigned, the gleam of the wolves eyes was the only light that came to sight, the howling of the jackal was the only sound to be heard, conspiracies were in the making while slanderers and the malicious were busily chattering'.⁶⁷

It must, therefore, be concluded that Shari'ati's return to Ershad was the work of Minachi and Hodayun who did not wish to lose him. As much as they respected and wished to secure the continuing collaboration of Motahhari and his friends, Minachi and Hodayun believed that Shari'ati was playing a key role in articulating a much needed Islamic doctrine.⁶⁸ Shari'ati had won the war, but he had not himself been involved in the battles.

From the night of Ashura 1971, Motahhari never again spoke at Ershad.⁶⁹ In the Iranian tradition of trying to heal wounds and bridge gaps between estranged old friends, many well-wishers tried to reconcile the differences between Motahhari and Shari'ati. Believing that the dispute was only due to differences in taste and a clash of egos, politically conscious individuals felt that if the two men could set their differences aside the significant momentum created at Ershad could bear more important social and political fruits. To the non-clerical well-wishers, who could not assess the depth and breadth of Shari'ati's challenge to the religious establishment, the schism between the two men only strengthened the hands of the more conservative religious elements and weakened the rank of the enlightened Islamists. According to Ali-Baba'i, while the well-wishers were trying to bring the feuding parties together, certain elements in the bazaar, close to Motahhari and well represented on Ershad's Consultative Committee, prodded him to press on his demands and effectively rendered any reconciliation impossible.⁷⁰

Even though Motahhari terminated his active association with Ershad in March

1971, certain promises were made to him indicating that a compromise could be reached and some of his demands met. By September of 1971, after some six months of negotiations, Motahhari's writings indicate that some sort of solution involving his return to Ershad was close at hand. Motahhari even referred to the future as a 'new epoch at Ershad' and insisted that its new composition and organization had to be publicly announced. However, he continued to insist that his participation and the return of his friends was contingent upon the formation of the Clerical Council and that the formation of that body was contingent upon the constitution of a Board of Trustees, a new Board of Directors and the appointment of successors to the founding members.⁷¹ Motahhari's conditions, which in fact called for the surrendering of all key decision-making positions to him and his friends were not met and the rupture was finalized in October 1971. From 23 July 1971, Motahhari had already started speaking at the al-Javad mosque. Gradually his old clerical friends gravitated towards al-Javad, which became their bastion.

A clash of personalities at Ershad evolved into a string of disputes and finally terminated with the departure of Motahhari. What was originally a clash of personalities between Motahhari and Minachi became a controversy between two different Islamic discourses appealing to two different audiences. Shari'ati represented one interpretation and Motahhari was forced into defending and finally representing another. As Shari'ati galvanized the debate on the definition of Islam, the dichotomy of Islam and the responsibility of the authentic Muslims, he came in the limelight, while Motahhari was pushed out into the shadowlands. On a personal level, Shari'ati's increasing popularity sowed the seeds of Motahhari's envy. Motahhari, the intellectual cleric could neither rupture his ties with his background, educational upbringing and his garb, nor could he tolerate the political excesses and controversial religious innovations of someone whom he thought was his protégé. Under Shari'ati's incessant attacks on the traditional clergy's hide-bound view of Islam and finally their categorization as polytheists, Motahhari chose not to abandon his family for an outsider, even if at first he felt great sympathy for his words. Shari'ati did represent some of Motahhari's own ideas, but in a more radical and fiery manner. Shari'ati picked up his criticism of the traditional clergy where Motahhari had left his. Was it not Motahhari who, some nine years earlier, had argued that inflicted by populism, the Shi'i clergy were incapable of leading society, since they were always condemned to trail conservative and change-resistant commoners? Had Motahhari not accused the clergy of defending the status quo and had he not pressed the religious dignitaries to take action and reform the clerical institution, *rowhaniyat*, lest all would be lost to 'those newly born shrines'?⁷²

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Restoration

On the day of Ashura (8 March 1971), Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati replaced Morteza Motahhari as the main speaker at Ershad. The title of his lecture was, ironically, 'Revolution and counter-revolution on Ashura'. The other speaker on this day was Hashemi-Rafsanjani, for although Motahhari never spoke again his friends such as Rafsanjani, Khaz'ali, Hasheminejad and Bahonar continued to lecture for another month. In order to compel Minachi to accept Motahhari's demands, however, the clerical speakers gradually cancelled their lectures, practically boycotting Ershad.¹ The last lecture by a member of Motahhari's inner group during this period was by Bahonar on 9 April 1971.² The second speaker on that same afternoon was Ali Shari'ati who began his first lecture on 'The history and mastery of Religions'. In effect 9 April 1971 marked the end of Motahhari's sway at Ershad.

The departure of Motahhari and his influential friends did not put an end to the disputes between the clergy and Shari'ati. On the contrary, now his clerical opponents could freely attack him and Ershad as they no longer risked compromising the influential clerics previously associated with the institution. Books and pamphlets attacking Shari'ati personally, and his discourse, started to appear regularly from October 1971, only five months after Motahhari's departure. The only two consequential clerical figures who broke rank and remained at Ershad were Sayyed Morteza Shabestari and Sadreddin Ballaghi. Their courageous act, construed as disloyalty to the clerical institution, earned them condemnation and invective. Even Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati, who for two nights had lectured in Motahhari's place, stayed away from Ershad for about eight months hoping, and trying, to talk Motahhari into returning. But breaking the embargo on Ershad meant taking issue with the clergy, a move that even at that time many preferred to avoid.

The Nascent Iranian Guerrilla Movement

By the time Shari'ati returned to Ershad the political landscape in Iran had undergone a significant tremor. On 9 February 1971, Iranian newspapers reported that

the gendarmerie outpost in the village of Siahkal had come under attack. On 17 March 1971, thirteen men charged with participating in the Siahkal insurgency were executed. It was not until 4 April 1971 that Sabeti the head of SAVAK's first bureau, appeared on television to discuss the Siahkal operation. Long in preparation, the incident was a premature attack by nine heavily armed members of the 'mountain' group of an organization which at the time identified itself as 'The Armed Revolutionary Movement' (Jonbesh Mosalahaneh Enqelabi) and had already started urban guerilla activities in July of 1970 by attacking and expropriating two banks in Tehran. After its Siahkal operations, during the last days of March 1971, some of its surviving members – most prominent among them Hamid Ashraf and Mohammad Safari-Ashtiyani – joined forces with the Ahmadzadeh-Puyan group and founded the Marxist-Leninist Peoples' Fada'ian of Iran.

Although the Siahkal operation was a complete military failure, it shattered the stifling semblance of political stability that had come to reign after the religious uprising of 15 Khordad in 1963 and sent an important signal to the revolutionary youth who had become impatient with the inertia. Siahkal enthroned the idea that, in the repressive political conditions of Iran, armed revolutionary struggle was the only effective means of inducing political and social change. The necessity of armed struggle and the categorical rejection of any other method of resistance became an unassailable dogma in most Iranian revolutionary circles. Siahkal also proved that it was possible to form a clandestine revolutionary group. Its success, it was argued, would depend on professional revolutionary expertise that could only be gained through revolutionary praxis. Having attracted the attention of the politicized young through its 'heroic' and 'romantic' à la Che guerrilla operation, the revolutionary left presented itself as the only viable vanguard of the coming revolution.

After Siahkal, the perception that politicized intellectuals should become guerilla partisans and in this way fulfill their revolutionary responsibility to the masses gained unprecedented popularity. Politicized university and high school students now had, in the heroes of Siahkal, a role model, and a simplified Leninist ideology to follow. What made the prescription even more attractive was that it was part and parcel of an international movement successfully sweeping across the underdeveloped countries seeking liberation from imperialism. The aura of political resignation, impotence and revolutionary lethargy had been demolished and revolutionary activism, voluntarism and heroism bred bolder and bloodier acts as more intellectuals came to view armed struggle as the only possible alternative. The politicized young were convinced that the only logic the shah's regime would comprehend was the staccato of machine guns. The tremor had produced an important and long-lasting socio-political landslide.

The public that Shari'ati faced after his return was, therefore, more politicized and far more revolutionary about what it would accept as socio-political solutions. Although it was not averse to lectures and preaching, the radicalized audience expected to be offered more extreme solutions. If an Islamic discourse was to

compete with a modern and 'scientific' world ideology such as Marxism–Leninism, it too had to address relevant socio-political and economic issues and prescribe just as revolutionary solutions.

Siahkal had not only influenced Shari'ati's public but the man himself. On the morning after the newspapers broke the news of the incident, Shari'ati's students were curious to find out what their teacher felt and had to say about the event. As usual they converged on the university cafeteria, their regular meeting place, confident that Shari'ati would eventually show up. Walking into the cafeteria, Shari'ati's face was expressionless. One of his students, who had been put up by the rest to pose the delicate question, shyly asked Shari'ati's opinion on Siahkal. Typically, Shari'ati responded with a parable. 'On his way to exile' he recounted, 'Mr [Mahmud] Taleqani stayed in Mashhad for a night. During his short stay, he was asked whether he thought Fidel Castro would end up in heaven or hell. Taleqani's answer to the curious interviewer was that if Castro did not get into paradise, would a puny (*shireh'i*) person like you ever get in?' Having told the story Shari'ati walked off.³

On another occasion, immediately after the Siahkal operation, Shari'ati was asked what he thought of Marxists and to everyone's surprise, he is said to have responded, 'I am a Marxist myself!'⁴ By this figurative statement did Shari'ati intend to condone the armed struggle or did he wish to sympathize with the socio-political ideals of the guerillas? Even though the latter proposition may seem more likely, since until this time Shari'ati had been far from a revolutionary voluntarist, the statement may mark the beginning of Shari'ati's change of opinion on revolutionary action.

The organization which later became known as the Peoples' Mojahedin of Iran was also catapulted into revolutionary armed struggle as a result of the Siahkal operation. Having prepared themselves since 1968 and spent long months awaiting the return of a sufficient number of their trainees from Palestinian guerrilla camps, before starting their armed struggle, the Mojahedin were forced into action. Wishing to rival the activities of the Marxist–Leninist Fada'ian, the revolutionary Muslims decided to disrupt the pompous celebrations of Iran's 2,500 years of monarchy before scores of foreign heads of states and dignitaries at Persopolis which were to begin on 12 October 1971. After long discussions, the group decided to launch a series of daring attacks on sensitive targets such as dams and electric power plants. Before putting their plan into action, the leading members of the Mojahedin were arrested. The arrest of the group's ideological nucleus accentuated Shari'ati's dual feeling about the pressing responsibility of intellectuals. Although he believed that the pressing task of radical Muslims was to articulate a coherent ideology before entering into action, the revolutionary acts of the armed vanguard left him unsettled and perturbed. These were young intellectuals who, in the tradition of all enlightened martyrs, were actively defying the powers at the cost of their lives. Emphasizing theoretical work, remaining indifferent to or indefinitely postponing revolutionary action, risked alienating those

who were thirsty for immediate action. Caught between the rational position of theory before action and the growing emotional and popular notion of learning about revolution by practising revolution, Shari'ati's position moved towards preaching praxis and propagating anti-establishment revolutionary thought. In his last few speeches at Ershad, Shari'ati became a proponent of revolutionary action.

Shari'ati's Ershad

Even though, with Motahhari's departure, Shari'ati became Ershad's central figure, between April and July 1971 he could not concentrate all his efforts on the institution. As a full-time professor at Mashhad University, he was forced to divide his time between his teaching assignments and his engagements at Ershad. Subsequently, he commuted regularly by plane between Mashhad and Tehran – a task facilitated, it is said, by an old friendship between Faryar, Chancellor of Mashhad University, and the brother of Ershad's founder, Mohammad Homayoun.⁵

Shari'ati's hectic pace of life eased during the summer of 1971 as both the University and Ershad closed down for the annual holidays. At the end of summer, Shari'ati along with four other faculty members at Mashhad – Cyrus Sahami, Manuchehr Bayat-Mokhtari, Qolam-Reza Zatalian and Vahab Vali – were informed that they would receive their regular salary but would have to stay at home, refrain from meeting colleagues or students and were banned from teaching until further notice.⁶ Matini, the dean of the Faculty of Literature, believes the decision was probably due to the desire of the security services to keep the five politicized professors out of the University until the Persepolis celebrations, which were to start in the first week of October, were over.⁷ Sahami, however, recalls that the reason given to them for their ban was that during a conference on Higher Education at Ramsar, the shah had criticized the universities as the cradle of guerilla activities, targeted the University of Mashhad and had given Faryar a list of teachers to be purged.⁸ During the period he was told to stay away, Sahami remembered that his home was regularly under surveillance, a condition that probably applied to all five men. After some four weeks, with the exception of Shari'ati, they were once again permitted to resume their teaching.⁹ Matini recalls that later Faryar informed him that Shari'ati would be sent to the Office of Mashhad University at the Ministry of Higher Education in Tehran.¹⁰ According to Matini, the transfer must have been effected by SAVAK, which had no desire to see Shari'ati continue his teaching at Mashhad University and yet did not want to fire him.¹¹

Sometime in October, Shari'ati arrived at his new post at the Research Department of the Ministry of Higher Education in Tehran. His official position was that of a researcher and his contract was initially for a few months. On his arrival, Shari'ati began working on a research project entitled, 'Education and Maktab' (the traditional school system). In this descriptive and analytical report, he

described the functioning and structure of the traditional educational system throughout its different levels. Shari'ati eulogized the traditional system, both at the primary and higher levels, as highly effective, open and free.¹² He praised the traditional school system as well as the seminary schools for their flexibility and adaptability to the needs and capabilities of individual students.¹³ At the seminary schools, Shari'ati observed, it was the students who chose their classes and their teachers.¹⁴ Comparing the Western to the Islamic educational system, Shari'ati tried to prove the superiority of the Islamic by listing twenty-two distinctive features. For example, he argued that society, constituted the main subject of the Western philosophy of education, whereas human beings were the main subject of the Islamic philosophy. Also, whereas Western education was in pursuit of power, the Islamic education was in pursuit of the truth.¹⁵ Hossein Kazemzadeh, the Minister of Higher Education at the time, who was also known for his piety, is said to have been very impressed by Shari'ati's report and recommended it to others.¹⁶

On Shari'ati's arrival at Tehran, Ershad rented a two-bedroom apartment for him and for Mohammad Taqi on the Old Shemiran road, right in front of the Ershad complex.¹⁷ Sheikh Qassem was also employed by Ershad to clean up the place, wash the dishes and do the errands. Later, Shari'ati's detractors, intent on using anything they could find to attack him, promoted Sheikh Qassem to the position of Shari'ati's special cook. Familiar with Ali's mannerisms and idiosyncracies, the management of Ershad wanted him housed close to the lecture hall. But his proximity did not assure Shari'ati's punctuality. He could not be on time for his regular classes, let alone for his occasional topical lectures. Frequently, after some twenty minutes or more of delay and as the packed audience gradually grew more restless, someone was sent across the road to get him behind the podium. When in class his students criticized his poor time-keeping and asked for explanations, Shari'ati readily admitted to his 'vice' and asked for forgiveness. He blamed his carelessness on his own 'undisciplined state of mind', which he claimed to be worsening as time went by.¹⁸

In Tehran, Shari'ati was separated from his wife and his four children, of whom the youngest, Mona, was less than six months old. Shari'ati's family life had never been smooth or easy. In one of his writings, he compared marital life with living in a communist country. Referring to a saying about marriage, yet without commenting on whether he believed or disbelieved it, he wrote, 'It [marriage] is like a castle, whoever lives outside is tempted to come in and whoever lives inside, dreams of getting out!'¹⁹ Heroes, revolutionaries and rebels who feel responsible for the well-being of social units far larger than the family cannot be tied down to family responsibilities which often constrain their freedom to do and say what is right and truthful. Selflessness and total dedication to the people and the just cause, which Shari'ati preached to his students, stood in contradiction with demands that the family placed on the person. Shari'ati felt the pain of the contradiction and had become accustomed to living with it. Alone in Tehran he had one less pre-occupation to deal with. Given the opportunity of working at Ershad almost

full time, from 29 October 1971 he was intent on totally devoting himself to the politico-religious education of a young and energetic audience who he hoped would become his 'messengers' throughout society. He spent his hours lecturing, discussing with his students, jotting down ideas that came to him, organizing cultural events such as plays and meeting with the small circle of people whose company he continued to enjoy. At Ershad, Shari'ati embarked on de-constructing traditional Islam and re-constructing a modern Islamic ideology, relevant to the problems and needs of his audience.

Soon, word spread of the prodigal thinker and speaker whose sharp tongue did not spare any idea or institution which he believed was allied with capital, political power and polytheistic religion, to exploit, oppress and stupefy the people. The crowds became so large that they could not get into Ershad's main lecture hall, and often a congregation of large groups burst out of its spacious courtyard to stand outside the building listening to Shari'ati's voice over loudspeakers. Traffic jams around Ershad and on the Old Shemiran road, one of the two main axes connecting Tehran to Shemiran became a regular feature of Tehran life, especially on Friday afternoons. A regular attendant recalls that on Friday mornings different groups of high school and university students would go mountain climbing, the favourite sporting activity of politicized intellectuals, in the north of Tehran. On Friday afternoons, many of these groups would descend on Hosseiniyeh and attend Shari'ati's lectures. Ershad gradually became a regular hangout for politicized intellectuals of different kinds, but especially those with an Islamic tendency.

The impressive number of students who attended each of Shari'ati's lectures came as a surprise even to him. At first he thought that perhaps as the novelty of his ideas and speeches faded away, the numbers would also decline. Surprised and delighted at the growing popularity of his 'message', he publicly announced that the favourable response to his lectures 'gave him hope and dented his despair, which was gradually becoming his religion'.²⁰ Shari'ati was a natural performer. The energy that he generated among his audience rebounded and further electrified the man, the lecture hall, and his enticed listeners. As the audience's response became more passionate, his mind became more agile and less circumscribed, his lectures more fiery and his audience more enchanted. Shari'ati became the bewitching voice of the message his listeners wanted to hear but nobody dared articulate, or could articulate so enticingly.

In a revealing account, Ali Davani, a scholarly cleric, provides a lucid description of the 'Shari'ati fever'. He recalls that one Friday afternoon, in the heat of Shari'ati's success, probably around the Autumn of 1971, as he was waiting for a taxi on the Old Shemiran road a black car pulled up in front of him. Davani recognized Motahhari sitting in the back seat of the car, inviting him to get in. As the two men discussed various current events, the car reached Hosseiniyeh Ershad. A large bustling crowd of young people had gathered in front of the building, some sitting on the steps, others simply hanging around on the pavement. The majority of the women wore head-scarves and some were clad in the veil.²¹ Caught in the

traffic jam in front of Ershad, Motahhari was recognized by the crowd. They pointed him out to one another with a sarcastic smile and sometimes faked a loud mocking laughter. According to Davani, they were clearly making fun of Motahhari for having left Shari'ati and Ershad.²² Motahhari, who was conscious of the students' ridicule, complained to Davani that Shari'ati was responsible for the aggressive and rude behaviour of religious youngsters and lamented their ungracious treatment of a member of the clergy who had until recently organized the programmes at Ershad.²³

The Clerical Opposition to Shari'ati

The success of Shari'ati's lectures was obviously at the expense of the targets of his attacks. Each group had a different assessment of Shari'ati's danger to their power and each reacted differently. Members or representatives of the capitalist class, a group which Shari'ati assailed, had mixed reactions. The industrial capitalists were either completely uninformed about, or indifferent to, his discourse. However, the merchant capitalists of the bazaar, who had firm links with religious associations, reacted very differently. One group is said to have sided with, prompted and even pushed Motahhari to oppose Shari'ati. This group continued to fuel the anti-Shari'ati campaign. Another well-respected and influential group of bazaar merchants became so mesmerized by Shari'ati's style, his love of social justice and his new Islamic discourse that it was deaf to his anti-capitalist arguments which eventually threatened their interests. To this day, some of their surviving members sit under the picture of Shari'ati on their wall and talk of their love and admiration for him and their successful commercial exploits in the same breath! Such merchants made a significant moral contribution to Ershad and supported Shari'ati against his enemies playing an important role in the success of the institutions' religio-political life until its closure.

The clergy, who after the death of Ayatollah Borujerdi lacked a strong and centralized leadership inside the country reacted to Shari'ati in a disorganized fashion. The clerical response came in three different waves, each representing the concerns of a different rank of the clergy. It also reflected the gravity of Shari'ati's incessant attacks on the basic principles of clerically-defined Shi'i thought.

The first anti-Shari'ati wave was orchestrated and conducted by a vocal and highly visible, yet hierarchically light-weight group of preachers (*vo'az*), known as 'the ten opponents of Shari'ati and Ershad'. The second came from a more reputable group associated with the teaching staff at the Qom seminary school and the reputable journal, *Darsha'i az Maktab-e Eslam* (Lessons from the School of Islam). The third came as legal opinions or *fatwas* of religious authorities. Of different degrees of influence and significance, the legal opinion of the *mojtaheds* first surfaced in August of 1972 and continued until after Shari'ati's death.

To distinguish themselves from what they claimed to be the Sunni and anti-

Shi'i discourse of Shari'ati, the anti-Shari'ati group of preachers called themselves *velayati* or believers in obedience to the rule of the Twelve Shi'i Imams. They included Seyyed Ebrahim Milani, an old friend of Shari'ati who preached in Mashhad and Tehran; Sheikh Qassem Eslami, a regular preacher at Masjed-e Shisheh on Jami street; Sheikh Mohammad-Ali Ansari-Qomi, who preached at the Ayatollah Tonekaboni Mosque in Tadjrish; Hossein Rowshani who was the prayer leader at Moftabad and Ebrahim Ansari-Zanjani, who was a preacher in Tehran. These five also contributed the majority of anti-Shari'ati publications that appeared between 1971 and 1976. At Mahdīyeh, located near the main bazaar, the famous Tehran preacher Sheikh Ahmad Kafi, whose sermons attracted very large crowds of listeners, joined the anti-Shari'ati chorus in force during November of 1971. He accused Shari'ati of Sunnism, mocking Islam and undermining the faith of believers.²⁴ Sheikh Mohammad-Taqi Falsafi, the most influential preacher in Tehran, Javad Manaqebi and Seyyed Ali-Naqi Tehrani were also associated with this group. Haj Ashraf Kashani, a prominent Tehran preacher who settled scores with Shari'ati by proclaiming Abu Zarr, Shari'ati's Islamic role-model, a common thief was also a member of the *velayati* group. All these preachers appealed to the mosque-going common and non-intellectual Muslims. Their objections started with Shari'ati's two articles in *Mohammad the Last of the Prophets*.

The first concerted attack on Ershad and Shari'ati while Motahhari was still there started with a five page 'Letter of Introduction to Ershad' to which four more pages were added after the departure of Motahhari. The final version of this vilifying document was signed by Seyyed Sadreddin Jazayeri, his son Seyyed Morteza Jazayeri and Seyyed Morteza Asgari who Shari'ati later called one of the clerical symbols of Safavid Shi'ism.²⁵ This pamphlet was widely distributed in Tehran's mosques and its content was included in Ansari-Qomi's book *Defa' az Hossein-e Shahid*, published in November 1971. This book, which was an admonition of Ne'matollah Salehi's (Najafabadi) *Shahid-e Javid*, should also be considered as the first book against Shari'ati and Ershad. The Jazayeris, who were closely related to Ayatollah Milani, conducted their campaign from the Jazayeri mosque which was located at the edge of the cobblers' bazaar. Morteza Jazayeri's membership of Ayatollah Milani's inner circle of confidants and his position as the ayatollah's close political counsellor, gave the Jazayeris greater respectability among the *vo'az*. The fact that the Jazayeris were the first among the *vo'az* to rally against Shari'ati and Ershad and that Ayatollah Milani was first among the high-ranking clergy to condemn Ershad and Shari'ati, was therefore, not coincidental.

At first, the objections to Shari'ati were centered around four main historical and factual topics all related to classical Shi'i-Sunni differences. As staunch devotees of the house of Ali, this group of preachers viewed any hesitation over the absolute evilness of the first three caliphs as a sign of pro-Sunni tendencies. The real issue, however, was probably that Shari'ati was considered to be a non-clerical intruder meddling in religious affairs and proving to be successful at it. Members of this group were committed to the traditional clerically-defined Shi'i Islam,

characterized primarily by its commitment to rites and rituals, a fanatical and non-intellectual adoration for Ali and his family and an equally fanatical hatred for anything that resembled leniency towards Sunnis. Mohammad-Ali Ansari-Qomi, one of Shari'ati's most vocal and scathing foes criticized the way religious ceremonies were conducted at Ershad. Referring to Shari'ati's mannerisms, he explained, 'as a pious and religious preacher you should wear a beard, you should begin your lecture with reference to the name of God and then the name of the Prophet, at the mention of whose name you should call for a blessing (*salawat*). You should finish your speech by cursing and damning the enemies of the house of Mohammad [the Sunnis]. You should refer to Imam Hossein and make your audience weep. You should pray for improvements in the welfare of Muslims and finish your discourse in the name of the Twelfth Imam who is in occultation'.²⁶

The fact that this first antagonistic group were mainly *vo'az*, or preachers at various popular mosques, indicates that Shari'ati's popularity and his novel discourse seemed to threaten their social role as the sole interpreters of the faith, and therefore their popularity and socio-economic status. Mohammad Moqimi, whose name is said to be an alias for Seyyed Ebrahim Milani, a cousin of the prominent ayatollah, echoed the concerns of this group. Referring to Shari'ati's so-called Sunni tendencies and 'animosity' towards the house of Mohammad, Moqimi wrote: 'Should this act of treason and murder become ever more popular by the day? And should we allow the number of the misguided to continue increasing?'²⁷

Shari'ati's lecture, 'Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism', probably constitutes a threshold in the clergy's assessment of his ideas and their relationship with him. For Sheikh Qassem Eslami the distinction between 'Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism' was 'the first act of treason in the world of Shi'ism'.²⁸ According to Ansari-Qomi, the lecture convinced the clergy that Shari'ati was not only intent on destroying the basis of their faith, but that his teachings were taking solid root within society.²⁹ Ansari-Qomi recounts that in Tehran he met with 'different groups and types of Shari'ati's followers', all of whom were so devoted that it was impossible for him to convince them of Shari'ati's fallacious propositions. Mournfully, Ansari-Qomi admitted that many of Shari'ati's followers came from families which had, for generations, been firm believers in the traditional Islam of the clergy.³⁰

Those who wished to soothe the clergy by reminding them of Shari'ati's services, argued that he had saved the young from moral decadence since, instead of going to discotheques, cabarets and cafés, they were now flocking to Hosseiniyeh Ershad. Sheikh Qassem Eslami's reaction to this line of defence was representative of the way the majority of the traditional clergy felt about Shari'ati. Eslami argued that before the advent of Shari'ati, the youth were engaging in sin (*fisq*), yet they had not lost their faith, nor were they bitterly hostile towards Shi'ism and the services rendered by known Islamic scholars.³¹ The argument that sin was better than apostasy and Shari'ati was training apostates became a prevailing conviction among the most conservative clerics.

The traditional preachers also viewed Shari'ati as an arrogant Western educated

fokoli (someone who wears a tie) who was trying to teach Islam based on his education at foreign universities.³² Shari'ati's harsh criticism and refutation of classical Shi'i references infuriated the clergy. The fact that he replaced accepted Shi'i sources with works such as the *Tarikh-e Tabari* and *Siareh-e Ibn-Hesham* led to incessant accusations of Sunnism and anti-Shi'ism. Shari'ati criticized the works and the socio-political behaviour of such luminaries of traditional Shi'ism as Mohammad Baqer Majlesi, author of the *Bahar al-Anwar* and Abbas Qomi author of the *Mafateh al-Jinan* and *Montahi al-Amal*.³³ He even questioned the authenticity of certain *hadith* in *Usul-e Kafi* by Koleyni, one of the most highly regarded Shi'i Islamic jurists.³⁴ He accused both Majlesi and Koleyni of propagating reports which could be used to present a 'fascist Islam' and 'a racist Prophet'.³⁵

Mocking certain commonly-held religious notions such as reciting a prayer which would suddenly turn one's enemy into a cockroach or one that would make one instantaneously rich, Shari'ati ruthlessly attacked the traditional clergy for propagating such superstitious nonsense.³⁶ He ridiculed the content of the painstakingly detailed and socially irrelevant Islamic notions and rituals described in the works and various manuals of prominent Islamic jurists.³⁷ In the process he derided such high-level dignitaries as Ayatollah Golpayegani for his manual on performing the *haj* ceremony.³⁸ As Shari'ati questioned the old sources and references, the rationality, application and relevance of their content and thereby the authority and legitimacy of established Shi'i jurists, the clerical establishment felt more threatened. It was as if Shari'ati had suddenly changed the rules and interpretations of Islam by using a different manual and different sources.

Ershad, and Shari'ati in particular, were also attacked for activities there and the comportment of those who frequented the institution. It's modernist approach to a religious environment was very different from the traditionally accepted norms and codes of conduct. At a Hosseiniyeh one should not sit on chairs, but on the floor, and the speaker should certainly not wear a tie, as Shari'ati did. The use of chairs was alleged to be an act of Sunnism.³⁹ The long hair of the photographer at Ershad was yet another source of complaint!

The most sensitive issue was, however, the attendance of women at Ershad. If, from the *velayatis*' point of view, Shari'ati's first cardinal sin was his animosity towards the house of Ali, his second misdeed was his attitude to women's participation at Ershad.⁴⁰ The fact that they could go there without the veil or the headscarf posed a serious problem for the traditionalists. A dress code did not exist at Ershad and therefore no one was refused entrance on the grounds of 'inappropriate clothing'. The women were, however, separated from the men and sat at the balcony of the main auditorium. The fact that some of the young women at Shari'ati's lectures wore mini-skirts enraged the traditional clergy. Moqimi called on the heads of families to restrain their children from going to Ershad⁴¹ while Ansari-Zanjani claimed that Shari'ati was opposed to the Islamic veil or *hijab* and that his attitude paved the way for 'the circulating accounts of sexual relations at Ershad'.⁴² Arguing that women were 'mentally and religiously deficient and, therefore, easily

deceived', Ansari-Qomi accused Shari'ati of enticing them to 'leave their homes' thus plunging them into 'licentiousness and prostitution'.⁴³ It is said that under enormous pressure from the traditionalists, and faced with all their calumnies, Shari'ati kept his calm. On the rumours of women's 'inappropriate' dress and 'moral laxity', however, he lost his cool. One day after his lecture, a man approached him and said, 'Doctor Shari'ati, you are always talking about Islam, but are you aware of the fact that girls come here in mini-skirts?' Shari'ati exploded screaming, 'why are you talking such nonsense and in any case if they are wearing mini-skirts why do you look at them!'.⁴⁴ Shari'ati responded to his clerical detractors on this point by organizing two seminars on women in July and November of 1972.

In the writings of his clerical enemies there was also an element of professional indignation, rivalry and jealousy. Shari'ati was not only butting in their affairs but derided their ignorance in a job they had been peacefully practising for years. He called the preachers, *vo'az*, half-witted dropouts of traditional seminary schools who were intellectually incapable of becoming *mojtaheds* or jurists.⁴⁵ He was damaging the reputation and socio-religious image of the clergy and they could obviously not remain indifferent. Moqimi, for example, cited Shari'ati's attack on the preachers lamenting that his followers had become so defiant as to not only mock the clergy but also the Sources of Imitation, accusing them of being 'retrograde and despised by society and individuals'.⁴⁶ In response to 'the Shari'ati phenomenon', his enemies poured ceaseless invectives on him: Wahhabi, Sunni, liar, treacherous, poisonous, irreligious, anti-religious, apostate, westoxicated, a pawn of colonialism, a Pied Piper and ignorant of Islamic law and history.

The pulpit and the pen were used extensively by the *vo'az* to attack and discredit Shari'ati. All the same, a three-volume series written by Hossein Rowshani is probably the only scholarly and well-documented critique of his works. Shari'ati even recommended the first of this series to his students. Rowshani took Shari'ati up on a simple and pertinent issue. To prove that Islam symbolizes liberation from sexual, racial and class discrimination, Shari'ati argued that God had ordered Abraham to build His home, the Ka'ba, nearby the home of Hajar, a slave who became Abraham's second wife. Shari'ati had argued that Hajar was the only person buried in the Ka'ba, and Muslims were told to circumbulate it during the *haj* to pay respect to the status of Hajar, who symbolized the oppressed. This, Shari'ati claimed, was a revolution typical of Islam.⁴⁷ Rowshani retorted respectfully that Shari'ati's assertion was not factual. On the basis of twenty-two acknowledged Islamic sources and references he demonstrated that Hajar was buried alongside her son Esmail.⁴⁸ The idea that only a slave woman was buried near or in the Ka'ba was, therefore, refuted by Rowshani, who characterized Shari'ati's writing as quasi-modern poetry.⁴⁹

Rowshani's critique pointed to a major problem with Shari'ati's works. He was more of an ideologue, using Islamic sources as the building blocks of his doctrine than a Muslim, free of all ideological preconceptions, seeking guidance in Islamic sources. He was more interested in finding sources and proofs that supported his

pre-conceived visions, formulations and conceptions than in remaining faithful to facts and events. If facts could not be found, the end was important enough to justify the use of his fictive mind. Shari'ati felt perfectly at ease with the distortion of facts if they served a socio-political purpose. It would be imprudent, if not presumptuous, to take Shari'ati for an historian, a social scientist and a teacher of facts and events; for he was indeed only interested in those facts which served the cause of righteousness.

Shari'ati's repeated assertions that he was voicing an individual opinion, and that he was subject to error, was an important defensive shield behind which he openly said whatever he wished. He was not, however, forthcoming with an acknowledgement of his specific errors or omissions. From the clerical point of view, Shari'ati had made numerous blunders. He had asserted that Abu Bakr had led the prayers during the last days of the Prophet; that consultation or *showra* constituted a fundamental basis of Islamic government; that prophethood was not terminated after Mohammad; that Abdul Mutaleb and Abu Taleb were idol-worshippers; that the Prophet ordered the closing of all doors in his mosque except that of Abu Bakr; that Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius and Lao-tze were prophets; that polygamy, the veil and *shafa'at* (intercession) were all inconsistent with Islam; that music was an Islamic art; that the Safavids had humiliated and distorted Islam, and that the use of the *mohr*, the clay on which Shi'is place their forehead during prayers, was an act of idolatry.

The defamatory, vilifying and outrageously false statements made by Shari'ati's detractors allowed him to brush off his foes as ignorant, slanderous, reactionary back-biters. In his book, Ansari-Qomi had introduced Dr Shari'ati as a 'graduate of sociology, literature and medicine' from a school called 'Valliance' in Paris.⁵⁰ Ansari-Qomi had also confused Alliance Française, the language school which Shari'ati had attended, with 'Valliance'. Capitalizing on the outrageously ignorant comments of his enemies, Shari'ati possessed enough of an effective arsenal to attack his detractors and even stone-wall legitimate criticisms such as the one by Rowshani.

Once the members of the *velayati* group started branding Shari'ati as a 'religious saboteur' (*kharabkar-e mazhabi*) and pleading with the government to put an end to his activities, Shari'ati could claim in private that the clergy, in collusion with the Iranian security forces, were plotting against him and wanted to silence him. In public, he spoke of an alliance between the clergy of Safavid Shi'ism and 'polytheistic rulers' to 'silence the word of God' and 'crucify the spirit of God'.⁵¹ Asking for his imprisonment if not execution, Ansari-Qomi called on the Iranian government to deal with him as it did with the terrorists and saboteurs in the country. He warned the 'imperial government of Iran', the Iranian people and the Iranian clergy of the danger of Shari'ati and he wrote that: 'during the past 1,000 years, the history of Islam and Shi'i Islam has never, nor ever will, encounter a more dangerous, dreadful and bolder enemy than Ali Shari'ati'.⁵² In January 1973, Ansari-Qomi was beaten up in Qom by a group of young men and in a circular

distributed by them he was accused of collaboration with SAVAK.⁵³

Ansari-Zanjani (not to be confused with Ansari-Qomi) threatened 'deviants' such as Shari'ati and Salehi with violence and force if they refused to accept the truth.⁵⁴ The fact that Shari'ati was publicly labelled as a 'second Kasravi' by almost all members of the *velayati* group suggested that a fate like that of Kasravi might await him. In private, Shari'ati seems to have told his close friends that his life was threatened by the clergy and their cohorts. Referring to the traditional and the monarchist clergy in public, he also spoke of his fear of the 'Safavids'.⁵⁵ To his students at Ershad he admitted his fear of saying more about the 'catastrophes, shamelessness and treacherous acts' of the traditional clergy. He ended one of his lectures dramatically, with these words: 'I cannot say any more, I am scared, I am sorry!'.⁵⁶ Shari'ati was also worried about his family in Mashhad, since on more than one occasion, in his absence, stones had been hurled at the window of their house.⁵⁷

By the end of October 1972, Alibaba'i recalls that he had become so worried about the possibility of an attempt on Shari'ati's life that he decided to ask Beheshti to intervene and end the boycott against Ershad. The anti-Shari'ati feelings whipped up by the *velayatis* were such that it was quite conceivable that a group of zealots would willingly 'stick a knife in Shari'ati's heart for the love of God and the Twelfth Imam'.⁵⁸ Alibaba'i recalls that even though both Beheshti and Hashemi-Rafsanjani seemed willing to come to Ershad's help, it was Motahhari who refused to resume his collaboration and insisted on his previous position.

Almost all publications against Shari'ati refer to the fact that as long as Motahhari and his circle of friends were at Ershad, things were conducted along proper Islamic lines. Qassem Eslami deplored how the 'preachers and the sermons' had suddenly changed and 'unknown speakers', had 'fabricated a sharp knife called Ali's Shi'ism'. Eslami accused Ali Shari'ati of sneering at the fundamental roots of Shi'ism.⁵⁹ Moqimi argued that once Shari'ati dropped his mask and it became clear that he was an enemy of Shi'ism, even Motahhari, who was an official member of Ershad, had left.⁶⁰ However, the Shi'i religious establishment at the time was not a homogeneous body. Paradoxically, some of Shari'ati's detractors targeted Motahhari in their attacks, labelling his works as the forerunner of Shari'ati's line of attack on the clergy.⁶¹ It would, therefore, be too simplistic to assume that all those who came to attack Shari'ati after 1971 were incited by Motahhari and his associates.

It was in the second wave of clerical response to Shari'ati, characterized by a more academic framework, that criticisms from Motahhari's associates surfaced. In February 1972, Makarem Shirazi, a respectable and learned cleric, fired the first volley with a review article called 'Is an Islamic government based on consultation (*showra*)'.⁶² The journal *Darsha'i az Maktab-e Eslam*, in which the article appeared, was the most established and widely read Islamic journal of the time. Makarem Shirazi, questioned Shari'ati's contention in *Eslamshenasi* that one of the fundamental pillars of Islam was 'government on the basis of consultation'. Makarem

Shirazi argued that the choice of Imam or the caliph on the basis of consultation (*showra*) went against the Shi'i belief that such a position was determined by God and appointed by the Prophet. Makarem Shirazi tried to demonstrate that Shari'ati did not believe in the key Shi'i principle of *itrat* or the primacy of lineage, determining the succession of Ali and his children after the death of the Prophet. If consultation, which resulted in the exclusion of Ali was a just Islamic principle, then what became of the Shi'ites historical claim to Ali's succession to the Prophet. Shari'ati's arguments were, therefore, rejected by Makarem Shirazi as 'baseless' and 'incorrect'.

Five months later, a second article appeared in *Darsha'i az Maktab-e Eslam* questioning Shari'ati's contention that the forbidden fruit in Eden was awareness. Shari'ati had made this statement in his seventh lecture on 'History and Mastery of Religions'.⁶³ The article, also said to have been written by Makarem Shirazi, stated that while the Old Testament specified that the forbidden fruit was knowledge and awareness, the Qur'an stipulated that Adam was endowed with knowledge before he dwelt in Eden.⁶⁴ Makarem Shirazi advised Shari'ati to discuss such technical matters with the experts in the field before publishing his ideas as a text. He concluded sarcastically, saying: 'we hope this friendly word of caution will be a reminder of the necessity of consultation, especially in the technical domains.' Not expecting to be attacked publicly by what he considered to be the more open-minded wing of the clergy, Shari'ati was clearly hurt by Makarem Shirazi's two articles. In a harshly worded letter, Shari'ati warned him against the invisible hands that were pulling the strings of those puppets whose only intention was to deepen the schism between the *ulama* and the intellectuals.⁶⁵ In a personal letter to a Razmju, who had urged greater self-restraint in his approach to the clergy, Shari'ati wrote: 'I have to endure [what they say] and I will, but am I also to put up with [the authors in] *Maktab-e Eslam*? Should I consider them as the likes of Haj Ashraf'.⁶⁶ Shari'ati concluded his letter by reminding his friend that the purpose of the articles in *Maktab-e Eslam* was to further discredit him publicly as a Sunni.⁶⁷

Two more references to Shari'ati appeared in the October and December issues of *Darsha'i az Maktab-e Eslam*. In the first article, which seemed favourable to Shari'ati, Makarem Shirazi maintained his position on the forbidden fruit, yet published references and sources sent in by the readers of the journal, confirming Shari'ati's position.⁶⁸ The last article appeared after the closure of Ershad, while Shari'ati was in hiding. It condemned those who interpreted the Qur'an in the preconceived way that they wanted instead of allowing the Qur'an to lead them along the correct path. Alluding to Shari'ati, the article suggested that those who imposed their will on the Qur'an were only playing with the divine verses and would therefore find themselves in hell.⁶⁹

Sensing the escalation of hostilities, Shari'ati prepared himself for *fatwas*, or authoritative religious pronouncements against himself. Responding to queries made by their pious followers on the validity and legitimacy of Shari'ati's statements on Islam, the ayatollahs and lesser-ranking *mojtaheds* made their opinion

public. The last anti-Shari'ati wave employed the ultimate weapon of the clerical establishment. The anti-Shari'ati *fatwas* came during three distinct periods. Once Ershad resumed its activities after its regular summer holidays, the first concerted wave of condemnations started. On 23 August 1972, in response to a query by Qassem Damavandi, the highly influential Ayatollah Milani forbade his followers to attend Ershad or read Ershad's publications.⁷⁰ Without mentioning Shari'ati's name, Milani made public his disapprobation of Ershad, Shari'ati and his works. Implicitly referring to Shari'ati's books, Milani commanded his followers not to read misleading and deceptive books (*zalleh*). Two months later, Ayatollah Mohammad-Sadeq Rowhani issued a lengthy respondium. He cautioned that Shari'ati's speeches and writings had entered 'a dangerous stage' and had 'caused anger and hatred among the country's pious Muslims'. Proclaiming Shari'ati as a *muhareb*, or a rebel against Shi'ism, Islam and its laws Rowhani declared that attending Shari'ati's speeches was Islamically forbidden (*haram*).⁷¹ Five days after Rowhani's respondium, Ayatollah Hassan Tabataba'i-Qomi also ruled that Shari'ati's works were 'misleading and deceptive'. He too directed his followers not to read them.⁷²

While Shari'ati was in prison, Ayatollah Milani issued a second statement reiterating his previous position. In a *fatwa* dated 15 June 1974, Milani supported the opinion of those preachers who had prohibited the reading of Shari'ati's books.⁷³ The second wave of condemnations all surfaced within a few days after Shari'ati's release from prison. The surprising coincidence may be construed as a reflection of the clergy's displeasure at his release. Ayatollahs Abol-Hasan Rafi'i Qazvini, Mohammad-Hossein Tabataba'i and Kazem Mar'ashi ruled that Shari'ati's writings were incompatible with Islamic sources and Shi'ism, recommending that they should not be purchased or sold, or studied by the common people.⁷⁴

The last round of *fatwas* against Shari'ati came after his death. These should be viewed in the light of Motahhari's deep concern and anxiety about Shari'ati's fame and influence among the young, especially after his death. In a letter to Khomeini, Motahhari lamented that a large coalition of forces who, in his opinion, had 'deviationist tendencies', intended 'to make an idol of Shari'ati so that no clerical figure would dare to opine on his speeches.'⁷⁵ Less than four months after Shari'ati's death, on 9 October 1977, Ayatollah Ali Fani-Esfahani issued the first *fatwa* in which he prohibited the purchase, sale and reading of Shari'ati's works.⁷⁶ By July 1978, similar *fatwas* were issued by Ayatollahs Ali Namazi-Shahrudi, Abdullah Shirazi, Malek-Hosseini, Abol-Qassem Musavi-Kho'i, and Shahabeddin Mar'ashi-Najafi.⁷⁷ Even Ayatollah Mohammad-Kazem Shari'atmadari, who had never taken a firm stand against Shari'ati and was even favourably disposed towards him, was forced to disclaim the 'rumour' that he had approved of Shari'ati's writings, allowed Shari'ati's books to be sold at his seminary school and had sent a message of condolence after Shari'ati's death.⁷⁸ After Milani's first *fatwa* against him and Ershad, Shari'ati lashed out against the aged source of imitation who had been very close to Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati. In a letter to Razmju, he wrote that

'Zionism and its masters can win *fatwas* from certain ayatollahs as easily as one can kiss a slut'.⁷⁹

Ruhollah Khomeini, who was in Najaf at the time when the clergy rallied against Shari'ati, was approached on more than one occasion to condemn Shari'ati's writings. As both a religious and a political figure his *fatwa* would have been most important. According to Do'a'i, who was at Najaf with Khomeini, an envoy was sent from Iran to solicit Khomeini's view on Shari'ati's *Eslamshenasi* and Motahhari's book on the veil. This must have been in 1970. Having read the criticisms and having referred to the original text, Khomeini had responded that Shari'ati's works were not unIslamic. Khomeini, therefore, refused to align himself with those ayatollahs who had harshly condemned Shari'ati. According to Do'a'i, Khomeini had observed that, 'these people wish to incite me against Shari'ati and Motahhari'.⁸⁰ The same Morteza Asgari who was one of the signatories of the first infamous anti-Ershad and anti-Shari'ati documents, also solicited a *fatwa* from Khomeini. In November 1972, after the first wave of condemnations by the ayatollahs he sent a very detailed letter to Khomeini from Saudi Arabia in which he collected what he believed to be all the faulty, flawed and even atheistic sections of Shari'ati's writings. Asgari had naturally asked for Khomeini's juristic position on Shari'ati's works. Having read the cases carefully, Khomeini retorted that 'I studied the cases referred to, none of the reprobations or criticisms were valid'.⁸¹ Seemingly worried that Khomeini might write something in Shari'ati's favour, Farsi is said to have interjected that Khomeini's support of Shari'ati's writings might have adverse consequences. According to Farsi, Khomeini had responded that he was not about to approve Shari'ati's writings but that Shari'ati had many supporters and that he was doing a service.⁸²

Initially, during the Winter of 1971 and the Spring of 1972, Shari'ati tried to neutralize the clerical propaganda against himself and Ershad by explaining and presenting his position while exposing the inconsistencies and fallacies of the arguments of his opponents and the misinformation they were propagating. Ershad organized a number of open seminars in which Shari'ati, his father, Shabestari and Balaghi participated and responded to questions and criticisms of the public. The first of these was held on 10 December 1971. On a more private level, Shari'ati met with individuals and presented his view of the debate and the controversies. It was not unusual for him to be invited to the home of certain well-wishers who would also invite a few notables deeply influenced by the anti-Shari'ati propaganda. At these dinners, Shari'ati would present his own case. On one such occasion, Shari'ati spoke until 3 a.m. By the time he had finished, his contesters were in tears and apologizing for their misconceptions.⁸³ By the Summer of 1972, the rapid pace of events and the multitude of challenges to Shari'ati made it impossible for him to make a continuous effort to dispel the accusations made against him. As the only means available to him, Shari'ati used his regular lectures at Ershad to respond to his opponents.

Whereas in Iran the response to Shari'ati's clerical detractors was unorganized

and even mute, Islamic students and organizations overseas affiliated with outlawed political parties or organizations in Iran took a firm stand in support of Shari'ati. A month after the closure of Ershad, the monthly *Khabarnameh-e Jebhe-e Melli-ye Iran*, published by Abolhassan Bani-Sadr in Paris, printed an article entitled, 'The official religion'.⁸⁴ The author demonstrated how, in pursuit of attaining absolute control over the religious sphere, the Iranian government was using 'clerical imposters' (*rowhani-namayan*) to defeat the progressive clerics and silence religious intellectuals. It argued that such men were being put up to the task of slandering and vilifying those who had tried to liberate the revolutionary ideas of Islam from the rigid caste imposed upon it. The article maintained that Ali Shari'ati was the victim of such a ploy. Reporting the closure of Ershad and the confiscation of all Shari'ati's books from shops throughout the country, the author demanded that the clergy be 'cleansed' and 'clerical imposters' purged. The article reported how Mohammad Ali Ansari-Qomi, who was alleged to have collaborated with SAVAK, and Manaqebi, two of Shari'ati's detractors, were given a good beating by the people.

In its April–May 1973 issue, *Payam-e Mojahed*, the overseas monthly journal of Bazargan's Iran Freedom Movement published by Ebrahim Yazdi, printed 'an open letter of grievance'.⁸⁵ The letter, written by the Muslim Student Associations of Europe, US and Canada, was addressed to Iran's high-ranking clerics and sources of imitation. It warned against the danger of the *velayatis* and their campaign of defamation. Attacking the 'fat clerical imposters' who defamed Ershad as well as the Hedayat and al-Javad mosques, it asked 'the ulema' to speak up against these people. Alluding to Milani's *fatwa* against Shari'ati and Ershad, the letter expressed concern over the fact that, supported by the sources of imitation and in possession of their *fatwas*, the government had forbidden the patrons of Islam to write and lecture. The letter was dated some one and a half months after the closure of Ershad.

Mosaddeqist Criticism

Shari'ati was not only besieged by his clerical opponents. His activities at Ershad and his 'tolerated' socio-political role as a vocal protester in what was considered by some to be 'revolutionary conditions', gradually came to be viewed as questionable, if not dubious. Questions and queries, even from individuals and groups Shari'ati considered to be modernist and radical started to irritate him. When people he thought of as enlightened intellectuals who would understand and support his discourse and activities started to express their doubts, Shari'ati felt abandoned, as he had on many occasions in his life. At the time, he told his class that he had come to rely only on his own faith, his God and himself, never trusting others or depending on anyone's help.⁸⁶

Kazem Sami recalls that a group of well-intentioned Mosaddeqist and Islamic

bazaaris, with a long background of political activity, had been influenced by rumours about Ershad.⁸⁷ It was said that, behind the scenes, Ershad was prodded and supported by the establishment. Concern was also raised about the presence at Ershad of certain influential bazaar figures suspected of links with the security services. Members of this Mosaddeqist group had approached Sami informing him that they wished to see Shari'ati in private to caution him about the possibility that he was 'being abused and manipulated by the government'. Sami organized a meeting at his office. Nekuruh, who was present, recollected that most of those who attended this meeting were members of the Iranian Peoples' Party.⁸⁸ Shari'ati had been a member of this party during and shortly after 1952, but had later fallen out with it. Sami recalls that Shari'ati arrived late at night to what was virtually a tribunal in which he was being prosecuted for his conduct, his association with Ershad and the continuation of his activities.⁸⁹ The meeting lasted until dawn. Having listened to the concerns of those present, Shari'ati is said to have argued that either his cultural activities – preparing the ground for a cultural revolution – were counter-productive and deviationist, in which case he asked the group to correct him; or that, under the circumstances, he was on the right path, in which case he told them that he should be helped in his pursuits. Sami recalls that it was after this meeting that he himself began his close association with Ershad and participated in a number of panel discussions and conferences. On 12 January 1972, he delivered his first lecture at Ershad on the topic of 'Women in Islam'. The meeting between Shari'ati and the bazaar members of the Iranian Peoples' Party occurred in early January 1972.

The Chidings of the Revolutionaries

The widespread arrest, trial and execution of the members of what came to be known as the guerilla organizations of 'the Peoples' Mojahedin' and 'the Peoples' Fada'ian' further radicalized the intellectual and political environment in Iran. From the end of January 1972, military tribunals in Iran were busy pronouncing death sentences on those whom the regime considered to be 'terrorists' and 'saboteurs'. The 'freedom fighters' who faced the death squads or were killed in urban skirmishes were from both Muslim and Marxist revolutionary organizations. The Mojahedin were militant, revolutionary and Islamic guerillas. Even though their ideology was claimed to be based on Islam, their economic and social world outlook was basically an Islamically-coated variant of 'non-materialist Marxism'. Furthermore, they considered the social conditions in Iran ripe for revolutionary activities. At his trial Sa'id Mohsen had drawn a parallel between the task of the Mojahedin and that of Imam Hossein, the archetype of martyrs. On 1 February 1972, Ahmad Reza'i found himself surrounded by the security forces and committed revolutionary suicide by detonating a grenade. He was the Mojahedin's first martyr.

In this legendary period of armed resistance, when stories about bold and bloody gun-battles, arrests, tortures and defiant executions circulated, certain questions were also being asked which shed some doubts on Ershad and Shari'ati. A common observation contrasted the relative freedom at Ershad with the increasing pressure on anyone engaged in any type of radical intellectual let alone political activity. In friendly circles some asked why Ershad was bustling with scores of young people listening to Shari'ati's provocative anti-establishment political discourse while prisons were being filled with young people actively opposing the regime? To minds historically obsessed with conspiracy theories the idea that Ershad was a ploy and a plot by the regime to keep the youth busy with empty words seemed ever more evident. Unable to find a rational motive for the government's lenient posture towards Ershad between July 1971 and November 1972 rumours began to spread.

On numerous occasions Shari'ati's students, some of whom were members or sympathizers of the Mojahedin, confronted him personally or even disrupted his lectures. On each occasion the issue was the same. On 26 May 1972, the day after Hanifnejad, Badi'zadegan, Mohsen, Asgharizadeh and Meshkinfam, the leadership of the Mojahedin were executed by a firing squad, a woman interrupted Shari'ati's fourteenth lesson on Eslamshenasi and said, 'With your permission professor, the time has come for us to revolt, we can no longer remain subdued. Today, the worthiest children of Iran and the beloved Mojahedin of Islam are being killed one after the other ...'⁹⁰ Shari'ati's students interrupted her passionate interjection with a long round of applause, at the end of which Shari'ati resumed his lecture. After this event, Shari'ati was summoned to SAVAK.⁹¹ On the day after the execution of Masud and Majid Ahmadzadeh of the Marxist Peoples' Fada'ian, Puran Bazargan, the first woman member of the Mojahedin recalls a similar kind of objection to Shari'ati at Ershad. She remembers that once again one of Mojahedin's women sympathizers chided Shari'ati for not referring to the executions.⁹² After the incident, Shari'ati is said to have privately asked Puran and Leyla Zomorodian, 'What do you want me to do? Say the things you want me to say and have them close down this place?'⁹³

On a cold Friday afternoon in December 1971, Ahmad Reza'i, a member of the Mojahedin's central cadre, who at the time was leading a clandestine life, sought Shari'ati in front of Ershad.⁹⁴ Reza'i reprimanded Shari'ati for keeping his students busy with empty words and distracting them from the path of armed struggle. He also accused Shari'ati of fulfilling the interests of the regime. Defending his position, Shari'ati retorted that his words would foster a cultural transformation, which would eventually save Mojaheds (freedom fighters) like Reza'i from escaping the ordinary people of the streets. Shari'ati added, 'the day people begin to take you in and give you shelter, you would know that my words have had their effect and on that day my responsibility would be fulfilled'.⁹⁵ Less than two months after this encounter, faced with the overwhelming power of the 'enemy', Reza'i chose martyrdom. In his speech, 'Martyrdom', Shari'ati, fulfilled his obligation by

passing on Ahmad's message and glorifying the role of the martyr and its modern symbol, Ahmad Reza'i.

Partially in response to the pressure that Shari'ati must have felt from radical and militant Muslims who believed that words should give way to active armed struggle, and partially under the emotional condition of the circumstances, Shari'ati delivered an important lecture called 'Martyrdom' on the eve of Ashura (25 February 1972) – the traditional night of mourning for the 'Lord of the Martyrs', Imam Hossein. As usual, Shari'ati reconstructed the past with contemporary figures. Ahmad Reza'i, who was 'martyred' less than a month before, became the contemporary symbol of Imam Hossein. In his lecture on 'Martyrdom', the first expressing his support for revolutionary theory, Shari'ati affirmed his belief in the just cause of the Mojahedin and martyrdom. He argued that when the unjust ruling powers have subdued the people with coercion, money, fear and deception, it was only the conscious choice of martyrdom that could break the silence and put the regime to shame. Hossein the Lord of Martyrs, according to Shari'ati, had the responsibility of engaging in 'armed struggle' knowing that he did not have the power to defeat Yazid, the symbol of repression and injustice. To Shari'ati's audience the association between Ahmad Reza'i, the modern Hossein and the shah, the modern Yazid, was evident. Shari'ati argued that Hossein could neither remain resigned nor wage an all out war; therefore, he chose martyrdom.⁹⁶ According to Shari'ati, even though those close to him tried to discourage him from engaging the enemy, Hossein could not remain indifferent to injustice and carried out his responsibility towards mankind. Openly supporting the cause of the selfless freedom fighter, Shari'ati referred to this legacy, concluding that 'those who do not have the courage to choose "martyrdom" will in turn be chosen by death.'⁹⁷ This speech left a deep impression on Mehdi Reza'i, Ahmad's younger brother.

Between July 1971 and November 1972, when Ershad was finally closed, Shari'ati walked an incredibly frustrating tightrope. In private he was accused of being a pawn in a game conceived by the regime, and therefore to its interest, by the very same Islamic modernist and radical intellectuals in whom he had emotionally invested all his faith. Yet Shari'ati was fully conscious of the fact that he was training 'freedom fighters', many of whom would sooner or later become members for the Mojahedin. As a believer in the doctrine of the *malamatieh*, he accepted the charges, smiled and remained silent. Ironically, the main charge for which Ershad was closed and Shari'ati was imprisoned was that the Mojahedin were recruiting their members there and Shari'ati's lectures were instrumental in initiating them to armed struggle.

The Word

'Do not take the word lightly, it is a living being, sensitive and enchanting'

From the day Shari'ati returned to give his first academic lecture, Ershad became the training-school of his doctrine. He knew his target and his audience. Even though he spoke about the people, he knew that it was high school and university students who were receptive to his message. He had, he told them, great faith in them: 'in order to start an authentic struggle one has to depend on the people and in particular on the young and intellectual generation, for once they become true believers they will sacrifice everything for their beliefs.'¹ To communicate his message, Shari'ati's attempt at reconfiguring, reconstructing and redefining classical Islamic notions, formed and propagated during the centuries by the clergy, took a fundamental and decisive turn. During this period, on both religious and political fronts, Shari'ati the reformer constantly pushed his ideas, statements and invitations to the brink of becoming revolutionary and subversive.

On the religious front, Shari'ati produced a veritable simulacrum, a quasi-palimpsest. His definitions, notions, symbols and arguments, which reflected a basic reality which he inferred from Islam, gradually masked, if not distorted, what were the traditionally and commonly held meanings and implications of these Islamic notions. Publicly claiming that he opposed the prevalent interpretation and meaning of such terms, Shari'ati readily admitted to employing his own special, yet different 'interpretation and inference' of Islamic concepts.² Prevalent and standard meanings were replaced with a new idea many times more attractive than the platitudes preached by the clergy. Through his speeches, what had started as a reflection of reality became the new reality, shedding a long shadow of doubt over centuries-old certitudes. Shari'ati's 'new-speak', challenged what was established as the meaning and manifestation of Shi'i Islam in Iran. The substance of his new Islamic reality had no resemblance to the old clerically-defined one.

Politically, Shari'ati's active involvement with Ershad coincided with the emergence of a highly volatile political environment. While his fiery speeches aroused the high school and university students and mentally prepared them for engagement in armed struggle, the daring and selfless revolutionary acts of this same youth moved and impressed him, further radicalizing his message. Just as in class,

the sheer enthusiasm of his students energized and moved him, on the streets, the selflessness and bravery of the guerillas' realization of his dreams, radicalized and aroused him. Shari'ati and that heroic-cum-romantic political period in Iran's history fed upon one another. As much as Shari'ati might have wanted to contain blind revolutionary voluntarism among young people, his 'insurrectionary' speeches were like uncontrolled gusts that swirled his audience in a mass of humane and chivalrous emotions, rendering the more compassionate or politicized among them no alternative but to confront the evil triad he constantly hammered at: capital, coercion and clerical deception. Shari'ati was caught inside a perilous spiralling of tension with both the clergy and the state. He absorbed the pressure and sprang back with provocative speeches that endeared him even more to his growing circle of disciples.

Shari'ati's speeches during this important nineteen-month period in his, and in Ershad's life, were of two broad types; educational-cum-academic lectures and insurrectionary. Whereas his educational lectures were an attempt at presenting relatively objective class-like lectures, his insurrectionary speeches were highly-charged, rhetorical performances or happenings. While the purpose of the educational lectures was to train and form Islamic intellectuals and cadres, the insurrectionary speeches were aimed at galvanizing and inciting the public. Shari'ati was at ease with his two different personalities and discourses. Asked about his swift change in style and approach from academic to agitator, he responded that each style represented the perceptions and position of a different social group and consequently a different way of looking at issues and addressing them.

Shari'ati's thirty-six academic lectures were broken down into fourteen lessons on the 'History and Mastery of Religions' and twenty-two on 'Islamology'. Each session was dedicated to a lesson. These quasi-academic lectures, delivered solely by Shari'ati, constituted the core of Ershad's educational programme. To attend them, students were expected to register for the classes, which were at first supposed to meet every other week. At one point, their huge popularity led to the official registration of 3,400 students.³

Educational Lectures: The History and Mastery of Religions

The mere fact that the attack on Siahkal took place exactly two months before Shari'ati's debut, played a crucial role in placing revolutionary Marxist-Leninist groups, their activities and propaganda under a magnifying glass, thereby distracting the security forces from the potential threat of an Islamic centre such as Ershad. The urban revolutionary armed activities and skirmishes that followed Siahkal in 1971, reflected the ever-growing threat and capacity of radical and revolutionary Marxist-oriented groups which was of far greater concern to the security services than the words of what seemed to be no more than a modern-day preacher.

The first part of Shari'ati's lessons at Ershad, from 9 April 1971 to 7 January

1972, entitled 'The History and Mastery of Religions', were for the most part based on his 'History of Religion' and 'History of Civilization' courses at the University of Mashhad and were essentially educational and informative. The second part of the academic lectures called 'Islamology' began on 4 February 1972 and was devoted to the construction and elaboration of a progressive Islamic ideology. These lectures were more theoretical and ideological. Feeling the pressing need to enunciate a modernist and radical Islamic doctrine, which could compete with Marxism in attracting the young, whom he correctly believed were the engines of social change, Shari'ati halted all other academic projects and abruptly embarked on the articulation of his doctrine.

On the first day of his series on 'The History and Mastery of Religions', Shari'ati thanked Ershad for having agreed to convert his public lectures into regular classes.⁴ He invited his students to attend the whole course so that they would be able to render a sound judgement on its entirety. Repeating a long-held belief, Shari'ati explained that he was starting with the history and exposition of religion because he considered his society to be a religious one and the intellectual to be an integral and inalienable part of it. The responsibility of intellectuals, he argued, was to bridge the gap between themselves and the masses. Having examined his society and understood the mind-set of his people, Shari'ati argued that the intellectual could proceed by guiding the people with suitable solutions.⁵ Befitting an academic environment, he adopted a highly objective and scientific posture. He proclaimed that even if 'provocations, incitements and inducements' were necessary, the time had come to put an end to this type of approach, replacing it with 'examination and understanding'.⁶ The object of his lectures, he claimed, was to arm the faithful with knowledge and awareness. Only then would 'faith produce miracles'. Even though, compared to his general lectures, Shari'ati minimized his provocations, his academic lectures possessed a good dose of subjective opinions and instigations.

In his first lecture, employing a Marxian language Shari'ati flashed his true ideological colours. He explained that whereas the bourgeoisie had been a progressive force in its battle against feudalism, not only had it lost its positive role but it had also become the exploiter and oppressor of people and countries.⁷ Man, Shari'ati argued, was in need of religion as a spiritual world-outlook and a compassionate compass in life. Referring to the dichotomy in religion, he acknowledged the existence of a negative religious tendency, supported by the ruling classes against the people, their social movements and religion itself.⁸ This was a general theme that crept into most of his academic lectures. Tip-toeing cautiously, Shari'ati gradually set the stage for his main topic, namely the multiplicity of Islamic interpretations. Two months into his classes, he opined that an understanding of Islam was dependent upon the perspective through which the examiner analysed Islam. 'When we open the Qur'an do we read it through the eyes of Ali, Abu Zarr and Bilal or through that of the philosophers, gnostics, or the likes of the *usuliyyun*?' Taking a clear position on his preferred Islamic paradigm, Shari'ati advocated a

liberation of the doctrine of Islam from the claws of 'Islamic civilization, culture and sciences.' This task necessitated teaching Islam as it was understood by Abu Zarr and not the jurists, scientists and gnostics of the likes of Bu-Ali, Mulla Sadra and Muhhieddin Arabi.

In his second lecture, Shari'ati proposed that Iranian intellectuals should learn from, but not ape, the West. He evaluated the Protestant movement through which a new religion was founded as a positive Western experience worthy of emulation.¹⁰ Arguing that dogmatic religionists were not true believers of their faith and that the anti-religionists were not really against the authentic faith, implicitly Shari'ati sought the support and alliance of the anti-religionists and proposed that instead of leading an anti-religious movement, intellectuals should transform actually existing religion.¹¹ To transform it and society, he proposed a historical study of religions based on their social origin, their development, their doctrine and the significance and the role of religious rites and rituals in them. Proclaiming that he would use class analysis and economic determinism as the most suitable tools for analysing human problems, he added that, using the methodology of the anti-religionists, he would arrive at very different conclusions from them.¹² Based on a critical analysis of the works of Durkheim, the father of modern sociology, and Levy-Bruhl, a disciple of Durkheim, Shari'ati set out to deal with primitive religions and concepts such as fetishism, animism and totemism.¹³ He attempted to show that primitive rituals and practices crept into Islam producing the negative Islam which he would later call the Islam of the nobility, the official Islam, the ruling Islam and Safavid Shi'ism.¹⁴

In his third lecture, Shari'ati began his systematic simulacrum by identifying some twenty-six common characteristics of all religions.¹⁵ His list included such traditionally inconceivable religious features as dynamism, evolution, free will, the principle of contradiction and struggle, a kind of dialectic, freedom and liberation, inquisitiveness, rejection of the status quo, idealism and finally a completely different and revolutionary interpretation of the concept of longing or *entezar*.¹⁶ Longing that had traditionally been considered as a justification for resignation and pacifism, until the appearance of the Twelfth Imam, was turned on its head by Shari'ati. He claimed that it referred, in fact, to a dynamic state of preparing for the ideal. 'Longing' in Shari'ati's vocabulary became a movement of protestation and challenge. He said, 'he who does not protest does not long and he who longs is challenging.'¹⁷ To eulogize and extol the act of longing or protesting, Shari'ati recited a verse of modern poetry from no other than Forugh Farukhzad, 'The bird shall die, remember the flight.' Shari'ati felt perfectly at ease with borrowing from the secular and libertarian Farukhzad to beautify, transform and communicate what he believed was the deeply religious message of longing for the Twelfth Imam. Referring to Forugh's poem, he praised her as a defiant poet who was 'reborn' and 'transformed'.¹⁸

From his fourth to fourteenth lecture, the last in 'The History and Mastery of Religions' series, Shari'ati discussed the great religions of China, India and Iran

providing an account of them and their prophets. Certain particular themes can be discerned in these lectures. First, there is an attempt to portray the prophets of such religions as revolutionaries. This is a part of Shari'ati's general attempt to produce a religio-historical simulacrum. He prepared his audience for his novel interpretation by stating that in the act of reconstructing religion, his main emphasis would be on the 'spirit of the faith'.¹⁹ Buddha is depicted as a rebel who stirred and incited the masses against the Brahmins, or institutionalized priests who exploited the people and eulogized as a liberator who emancipated the people from the polytheism propagated by Brahmins, and a revolutionary who unfailingly battled against the existing class system and the religiously imposed caste system.²⁰

Second, Shari'ati tried to demonstrate that healthy and harmonious modern societies needed to be concerned with both material well-being and metaphysical religious sentiments. The total rejection of one and embracing of the other, he argued, was doomed to failure. The traditional religions of ancient civilizations were more concerned with individual self-purification and hence personal liberation than with social improvement, socio-economic justice and well being. In contrast to the prophets of Abrahamic religions who, Shari'ati maintained, were from modest and poor social origins and were consequently greatly concerned with the material life of society, the prophets of these ancient religions had prosperous class-origins.²¹ Their comfortable lives paved the way for their rebellion against material goods and belongings. It was on the basis of rejecting worldly goods and commitments that they found their Sufistic religions.²² To prove his point Shari'ati gave references to Taoism, Hinduism and Buddhism, which he argued had a great resemblance to Iranian Sufism. Challenging and negating the individual's 'deceitful self' in order to attain the spiritual 'authentic self', thus elevating the individual towards universal union with all human beings and their eventual union with God was similar to the quest of Iranian Sufis. Shari'ati admired the emphasis placed on personal and private rebelliousness against the 'self', yet he abhorred its justification and legitimization of the class-ridden status quo.²³ He condemned the abandonment of reason and rationality for the sake of seeking what lay beyond life. To attain felicity human beings were in need of 'ethics, philosophy, metaphysical religious feelings, and reason'.²⁴ The social, Shari'ati argued, has to be managed with reason, justice and economy, while the individual has to be reared in gnosticism.²⁵

Pursuing two main objectives in his analysis of Zoroastrianism, Shari'ati depicted Zoroaster as a monotheist and his religion as polytheistic. First, he tried to demonstrate that the pure, monotheistic and revolutionary thoughts of religious prophets were distorted and falsified at the hands of institutionalized religion.²⁶ Second, he argued that due to this falsification each religion developed two contradictory accounts of itself and subsequently two doctrines. One was authentic, monotheistic and revolutionary. The other, concocted by the priests of institutionalized religions, was false, polytheistic and reactionary. Having outlined a theory

of religious metamorphosis, Shari'ati concluded that just as Shi'ism could be divided into Safavid and Ali's, Zoroastrianism could also be divided into the religion of Zoroaster himself and that of the *mo'beds* or priests.²⁷ Shari'ati argued that while authentic religions had a socio-economic perception of society based on an ideology, false and institutionalized religions vacated the authentic ideological content of their doctrine and replaced it with rituals and rites.²⁸ Religions of socio-economic and political change are authentic; conversely pacifying, depoliticizing and ritual-based religions are hypocritical and deceptive. Arguing that institutionalized religions based their legitimacy on their ability to perform formalistic rituals and rites and not a solid knowledge of their religions, Shari'ati told his young audience that there was a pressing need for a socio-economic definition of *towhid* or monotheism.²⁹

At the beginning of his seventh lecture, on 2 July 1971, Shari'ati announced that he would discontinue his regular lectures on the religions of India since the summer vacations were approaching and provincial students were already returning home. Ershad meanwhile suspended its activities from 16 July until 28 October. Even though the official and a partial reason was that of the summer vacation, Ershad also wanted to economize on the very few speakers that continued to lecture after the departure of Motahhari and his friends.³⁰ Shari'ati used his last two 'academic' lectures before the vacations to publicly respond to his and Ershad's clerical detractors.

Shari'ati's main objective during these two lectures was to draw a major ideological line between himself, as the representative of 'responsible Muslim intellectuals', and his clerical foes whom he accused of opposing 'any thought or religion that was not somniferous but instead awakened the people'.³¹ A religious person who insisted on keeping his flock in obscurity and ignorance had lost sight of the purpose of religion and creation, which according to Shari'ati was to 'enlighten'.³² Accusing the guardians of institutionalized religions of obscuring the truth and preventing 'enlightenment', Shari'ati labelled them as 'polytheists' clothed in monotheism.³³ The pretenders to the faith, he said, were to be found in all religions.

Explaining the process of 'becoming polytheist', Shari'ati argued that, as official custodians of monotheistic religions, priests attained power and subsequently formed an institutionalized class.³⁴ Denying their claim to legitimacy and piety, Shari'ati classified an institutionalized clergy as a third and crucial pillar or partner of the ruling class, composed of political power, economic power and religious power. The first, he maintained, exercised political repression, the second economic exploitation and the third 'stupefaction' (*estehmar*) of the people.³⁵ The ideological line Shari'ati wished to draw for his audience was clarified further in political terms. The conservative and change-resistant clergy who attacked his modernist and egalitarian Islam were presented as the enemies of the people since they were a part of the ruling class. To emphasize the importance of 'enlightenment' in religion, Shari'ati argued that the forbidden fruit in Eden was that of 'enlightenment'

and 'consciousness'.³⁶ God forbade Adam and Eve to eat the fruit, he contended, because all cares and pains result from enlightenment and consciousness. The responsible human being is, therefore, born after Adam and Eve have eaten the forbidden fruit. The responsibility of religion becomes that of nurturing enlightenment, not of obstructing it. In the course of his eighth lecture, Shari'ati declared that, 'from the peoples' point of view, the Islam which does not herald social justice and does not assure freedom and a just leadership is the same as any other religion and even maybe identical to all other infidelities.'³⁷ In this lecture, Shari'ati distinguished between Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism and began developing his ideas on the contradictory use of key concepts by the two faces of the same religion.

Emphasizing the socio-political message of religion as the key to its attraction, Shari'ati proclaimed that what made Islam appealing to those who embraced it was not the Qur'an, the Sunna and the concept of resurrection, but its deep commitment to social justice or *adl* and revolutionary leadership or *imamat*.³⁸ In order to successfully complete his substitution exercise of replacing the old established religious concepts with his own new ideological interpretations, and thereby re-writing his own religion, Shari'ati informed his audience that in order to understand the real meaning of concepts such as justice (*adl*) or leadership (*imamat*), they should 'forget the meaning of this term as it existed in their minds'.³⁹ He transformed the classical meaning of *imamat* into a system of government based on a transitional 'democratic and revolutionary leadership' or a dirigiste democracy.

Shari'ati's new socio-political meaning of *imamat*, did include certain faint aspects of the original meaning, which was entirely concerned with the spiritual guardianship or leadership of the Shi'i imams. Emphasizing the temporal and socio-political aspect of *imamat*, and relying on his understanding of the 'spirit of the faith', he identified the ideology of leadership as egalitarian. Irrespective of the original definition of *imamat*, Shari'ati's new interpretation or palimpsest was much more popular with his audience than the outmoded and obsolete original meaning of the term. Shari'ati was putting into practice a motto that he firmly believed in; 'yesterday has to be understood with a perception belonging to the past, while today has to be understood with a modern perception'.⁴⁰ The original was so imaginatively reproduced in Shari'ati's hands that the distorted and mutated imitation came across much more convincing and appropriate than the original. True to his own statement that 'the intellectual can turn, interpret or present a concept in any way he wishes',⁴¹ once Shari'ati mastered the method of imaginative reproduction of Islamic concepts on ideological grounds, he embarked on redefining as many key Shi'i concepts as he could.

A Radical Islamic Ideology

As much as Shari'ati presented a contemporary, progressive and socialist version of Islam he was competing with a well established ideology, also engaged in armed struggle. His challenge was to formulate a coherent radical and revolutionary Islamic doctrine, especially after the arrest and execution of the founding members and ideological architects of the Mojahedin. Shari'ati's first lecture on 'Islamology', elaborating his religio-political doctrine, took place on 4 February 1972 – three days after the bloody death of Ahmad Reza'i, eleven days before the leaders and ideological masterminds of the Mojahedin were put on trial, and some twenty days before a lecture on 'Martyrdom' in which he extolled the cause and bravery of selfless freedom fighters.

The formulation of a radical Islamic ideology, Shari'ati believed, was the first and most important step towards effecting social change. Sympathetic to the armed revolutionary movement of the guerillas, Shari'ati was not convinced of their prospects for success. He differed with them over the extent to which the subjective conditions for the success of an armed revolutionary struggle were available. Shari'ati argued that social contradictions, poverty, inequality and repression did not automatically bring forth the conditions for a revolution. The leftists, he claimed, made a reductionist assumption. The objective conditions had to be explained to the people and inculcated in their minds; the people would act once they felt and understood their social condition. The responsibility of the modern messenger or intellectual was to carry the torch of enlightenment, consciousness and liberation by explaining social contradictions and injustices.⁴²

By teaching the revolutionary Marxists and all those who believed in revolutionary activism a concept borrowed from Marx and Lenin, Shari'ati was simply reiterating the old axiom that prevalent modes of production generate exploited classes, yet these classes need to become politically conscious before becoming revolutionary. In the Marxian jargon, a 'class in itself', the product of transformations in the economic base, had to be transformed into a 'class for itself' endowed with political class-consciousness. Shari'ati's assessment of Iranian society was that the exploited 'class in itself' had to be steeped in political and ideological education before it could become revolutionary. Once the unequal and unjust social conditions were conveyed to the people and the ideal was described to them by intellectuals, Shari'ati believed that 'society would automatically take the proper course of action'.⁴³ However, Shari'ati gradually came to the conclusion that revolutionary warfare itself constituted a forceful means of explaining the objective conditions, thus inducing political class-consciousness. This realization confronted him with the challenge of calling his audience to armed struggle.

The educational programme at Ershad was supposed to cover three broad fields within a three-year period. After the end of the lecture series on the 'History and Mastery of Religions', which was to be delivered over one academic year, Shari'ati was to launch into a series entitled 'Sociology of Religion' and then into 'Islamology'.

The political unfolding of events forced him to change this order. Even before he finished his lectures on the 'History and Mastery of Religions', he suddenly announced that he had decided to continue with 'Islamology', the content and methodology of which he claimed to be different from his old book of the same title published in Mashhad.⁴⁴

At first, Shari'ati provided a broad outline of the ideal Islamic educational establishment he envisaged. He argued that educating and fashioning the 'other' constituted an Islamic duty. The dissemination of Islamic ideology fulfilled this responsibility. At Ershad, Shari'ati sought to create a 'reflective environment' conducive to the education of 'believers and *mujaheds* or freedom fighters'.⁴⁵ Theoretical classes had to be enriched with ideologically-based films and plays. Shari'ati tried to create a space for his own radical Islamic ideology in an environment which was monopolized by the 'religious traditionalists' and 'secular modernists', who already possessed their own 'reflective environments' and channels of communication.⁴⁶ Employing the arts for the propagation of his ideology he became actively involved in promoting a series of plays at Ershad. He correctly believed that such activities would contribute to the blossoming of a modernist Islamic cultural milieu. The first play, staged on 23 July 1972, was 'Abu Zarr', which had already been successfully performed in Mashhad. The next was 'Sarbedariyeh' which ran only for one night before Ershad was closed down in November 1972. A third play, based on his lecture, 'Hossein vares-e Adam', (Hossein the successor of Adam) was also in the stage of production but never got the chance to be performed.⁴⁷

In the first two lectures on Islamology, Shari'ati outlined his Islamic ideology, which he considered as his most important theoretical contribution.⁴⁸ He proposed the construction of a new ideology based on and inferred from the Islamic body of knowledge that already existed. Proclaiming himself a pragmatist, he claimed that he was only interested in those religious, philosophical and literary facts and concepts which were 'of some use to us today'.⁴⁹ Shari'ati maintained that he firmly believed in addressing the present needs of the new generation and the society he lived in.⁵⁰ The object of ideologizing Islam was to raise one's own consciousness but also to impart intellectual and social enlightenment to the masses. An Islamic ideology which could raise the consciousness of the people, he asserted, would create a liberating movement.

Shari'ati defined a doctrine as a harmonious constellation of philosophical views, religious beliefs, ethical values and scientific methodologies, giving birth to a meaningful, goal-oriented and dynamic entity.⁵¹ An ideologically-based sociological analysis judged, criticized and evaluated events on the basis of its belief system and was, therefore, assessed as value-judgemental, goal-oriented and non-academic.⁵² Shari'ati began by employing the Marxian metaphor of base and superstructure. In terms of its content, Shari'ati's base has nothing to do with the traditional Marxian base composed of the material forces of production and its corresponding relations of production. It is instead a credal base (*zir bana-ye e'teqadi*); yet his superstructure, identified as ideas and thoughts emanating from

the base, is quite similar to the Marxian. Shari'ati explained that since his object of analysis was a belief system and not a social system, he was obliged to develop the concept of a credal base.⁵³ Later, however, he relapsed into the use of base as an economic base.

Shari'ati's 'credal doctrine' (*maktab-e e'teqadi*) is based on a world-outlook. This constitutes the optic through which man and his nature, society, and the philosophy of history is perceived and defined. These three foundations of anthropological, sociological and historical interpretation of the doctrine emanate from its particular world-outlook. The ideological superstructure, Shari'ati maintains, is in turn constructed on these three pillars.⁵⁴ Out of the ideology emerges the 'ideal society' and from that, the 'ideal human being'. Ideology is, therefore, said to be a function of the anthropological, sociological and historical view that we employ to express our doctrine's philosophy of life. At the same time, the notion of an ideal 'human being' and 'society' is shaped by ideology. Ideology, Shari'ati argues, is an interpretation of the individual, society and human life in all its aspects. It provides an answer to the questions 'what is the individual's actual state of being?' 'what is to be done?' and 'how should the individual be?'⁵⁵ Shari'ati adds that ideology becomes meaningful only when a doctrine contains the two crucial elements of a utopia and an ideal conception of man, since they provide the desirable objectives towards which society has to move. The ideal human being constitutes the social role model that all should emulate and the ideal society presents the utopia, in the direction of which society should move.⁵⁶

Shari'ati described the world as a purposeful and continuous entity with an 'ideal and an objective'.⁵⁷ Contrary to the position of the clergy, he argued, *towhid* (monotheism) was not a concept limited only to the belief in one God. Outlining his *towhidi* (monotheistic) paradigm, Shari'ati construed monotheism not only as a world outlook, but a philosophy of history, a sociological outlook, an ethical doctrine and finally a social mission.⁵⁸ On the basis of his monotheistic doctrine, Shari'ati rejected the traditional dichotomies between soul and the body, material and the spiritual world, physical and the metaphysical world, here and the hereafter. Monotheism was presented as a unity of all traditionally believed contradictions. In Islam, Shari'ati claimed, monotheistic cognition allows the individual to go beyond the traditional bickering between the philosophers seeking to prove God through logic and rationality, and the gnostics rejecting their methodology and claiming that only intuition could lead the wayfarer to God.⁵⁹

As much as the monotheistic world-outlook presented a negation of negations, it symbolized Man's liberation from submission to any social force or power that may be other than God. Shari'ati declared that Man was only responsible before one Judge. This was the meaning of Islam, submission to God. Monotheism also meant rebellion against all earthly powers which sought submission, wishing to replace the position of God.⁶⁰ Shari'ati's monotheism, contrary to that of the traditional clergy, had specific social, political, economic and ethical implications. The movement from contradiction towards unity in each of these aspects, and

concomitantly in society and history, characterized the objective of his Islamic doctrine. His formulation of a monotheistic world outlook, he declared, should be considered as a challenge to the world outlook of materialism and idealism.⁶¹

The social and religious evolution of humanity, Shari'ati argued, followed a parallel path.⁶² Providing a broad historical schema, he posited that social and religious history originated from a harmonious state and evolved into a situation of strife. The primitive stage of social and religious evolution was characterized by communism and economic egalitarianism, while the intermediary period of strife was characterized by antagonistic contradictions, class societies, oppression and exploitation. The period of strife, he maintained, would eventually lead to a new and superior stage of social and religious unity and harmony.⁶³ This visionary society was characterized by *towhid* or monotheism in all its aspects. Just as Marx had spoken of primitive and real communism, Shari'ati spoke of primitive and advanced monotheism. According to Shari'ati, an important social feature of the stage of strife and contradiction was the evolution of a spiritual and religious class which justified, legitimized and effectively supported the emerging class-ridden societies. During the period of socio-economic contradictions, the ruling class underwent fragmentation due to an internal division of labour. Its functions were relegated to the new ruling triad of political oppressors, economic exploiters and religious stupifiers. Even though each constituent part of the ruling triad performed a separate function, all three followed the common objective of subjugating and enslaving the people for their own narrow interests.⁶⁴ During this historical period, the evil ruling triad, substituting itself for God, ushers the period of polytheism. The association between the religious concept of polytheism and the socio-economic concept of a class-ridden society, Shari'ati claims, is easily deduced from the Qur'an.⁶⁵ Upholding the nineteenth-century view of Western intellectuals, who labelled religion as the opium of masses, Shari'ati argued that the religions they referred to were polytheistic religions caught in the grips of the 'official clergy'.⁶⁶ The mission and objective of monotheistic thought, he claimed, was the reinstatement of 'freedom, equality and classlessness' through the destruction of the triad of 'wealth, political power and religion'.⁶⁷

Providing a cursory definition of what he called the 'productive base' in the 'slave, feudal and bourgeois periods', Shari'ati tried to demonstrate that, according to a Marxian analysis it was the economic base that determined the ideological, ethical and religious superstructure. He argued that from this perspective a causal relation existed between the base and the superstructure, and concluded that ideas on their own could not, therefore, cause change in the social system or the base since they were merely effects.⁶⁸ Marxists, he contended, claimed that once the base was transformed, ideology, religion, the class system and class relations would also change.⁶⁹ In his exposition of the Marxist meaning of an economic base, Shari'ati made no reference to the forces of production, the stage of their development, the legal and economic status of labour, property relations and the prevalent mode of surplus extraction – the standard Marxian criteria for distinguishing one

mode of production from another. He simply went on to contrast his own Marxian version of the base and the superstructure with the classical Weberian notion of the relation between religion, ideology and the economy. Weber, he argued, believed that ideology and religion acted on the economy and the 'productive base' causing it to change.⁷⁰ Declaring both Marxian and Weberian theories as partial truths, Shari'ati claimed that the relation between the religious and ideological superstructure and the economic base was one of mutual and reciprocal causal relation, each influencing the other and influenced by the other.⁷¹

Making a case for what he was engaged in at Ershad, and his own cultural and political activities, Shari'ati argued that a 'teacher or a simple preacher' could change the 'obsolete and worn-out' traditional rites and rituals of a backward society as well as its archaic methods and relations of production. This task could be successfully achieved by relying on the people's traditions, attracting their attention, understanding their language, penetrating their thought process, creating a new faith and finally imparting to them a new consciousness.⁷² Emphasizing the role of the 'message' through education, as all utopian socialists had done, Shari'ati deduced that it was not necessary to wait for the productive base to change in order to effect a change in ideology and society. Indirectly referring to what he was trying to do, he contented that Marx could not foresee how religion as an aspect of the superstructure could bring about change in the base.⁷³

Going off on a tangent, Shari'ati emphasized the primacy of will-power and volition as a motor of historical change. Sounding very much like a revolutionary voluntarist, he chided Marx for not having grasped the importance and revolutionary role of will-power.⁷⁴ The will and determination to initiate change and create a righteous society had to be induced and motivated by a revolutionary ideology. Shari'ati firmly believed that his Islamic ideology would kindle a social consciousness and a faith that would in turn generate, a 'miraculous spurt of energy', fermenting a 'social revolution'.⁷⁵ Praising the power and significance of will-power based on awareness, he argued that 'a conscious and alert individual' could 'grab history by the collar' and 'propel it from feudalism to socialism', thus disrupting the orderly historical stages of development and historical determinism.⁷⁶ Later, and in more explicit terms, Shari'ati argued that a revolutionary vanguard was capable of effecting a social revolution and referred to the ability of a 'group of responsible intellectuals', forcing history to skip its predetermined stages of development.⁷⁷

Having elaborated the world outlook of his doctrine Shari'ati moved to the three pillars that emanated from it. Outlining the anthropological outlook of his Islamic doctrine, he engaged in an exposition of Islamic dialectics. The dialectical method and the principle of contradiction, he claimed, were specific to Eastern and not Western philosophy and religion.⁷⁸ Later in his lectures, Shari'ati declared that the dialectic he espoused was not necessarily a Marxian method of analysis but primarily religious and Islamic.⁷⁹ Using the dialectical method, he referred to human beings as the union of two opposites. The 'spirit of God' – representing

creativity, consciousness, knowledge, love, and forgiveness – was the thesis, while the 'stinking mud' from which human beings were made, representing stagnation and inertia, corresponded to the antithesis.⁶⁰ The struggle between the thesis and the antithesis, which existed in the nature of human beings and their history created an ascending deterministic and dialectical movement. The path from the 'stinking mud' to 'God' was called religion. Shari'ati proudly claimed religion as a means to an end and not an end in itself.⁶¹ The negation of the negation, or the synthesis, according to Shari'ati, was a God-like creature who would use his free will and ingenuity to successfully construct a human paradise on earth.⁶²

In Shari'ati's philosophy of history, his admiration for the dialectical approach is once again clearly demonstrated. In this tool he found the dynamic elements of movement, change and transformation which he valued. His account of an Islamic philosophy of history closely resembles a classical Marxian description. According to this doctrine, the philosophy of history is based on scientific determinism, dialectical contradictions and a perpetual struggle between two contradictory forces ever since the dawn of history.⁶³ History is said to be purposeful and shaped by contradictions. Shari'ati views contradictions as the motor force behind all types of development. He uses dialectics not only as a method of social analysis but as a set of laws governing individuals, society and history.

Going back to the Qur'anic story of Abel and Cain, Shari'ati made an unprecedented religious argument. The history of class struggle, he declared, began with the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. Shari'ati associated the slaying of Abel by Cain as the victory of agricultural production based on private property over the pastoral economy based on primitive communalism and the absence of private property.⁶⁴ This historical class struggle also takes on a political and ethical aspect. Cain is the oppressor, the perpetrator of exploitation, the faithless, the treacherous fratricidal who unleashes class society. Abel, on the other hand, is the oppressed, the disinherited, the peaceful victim, the faithful and the fraternal type. On the basis of these two representatives of the oppressed and oppressor 'classes', Shari'ati develops his concept of warring factions throughout history. For him there can only be two classes – the oppressed, the disinherited and the victims of exploitation on the one hand and the oppressor, the ruling classes and the exploiters on the other. Shari'ati argued that the weapon with which the two classes conducted their war was that of religion. This he claimed, gave rise to the war of religion against religion and the struggle between the Abelian religion of monotheism and the Cainian religion of polytheism.⁶⁵

The restoration of the Abelian system through a world revolution was the predetermined outcome or purpose of history. This inevitable outcome, Shari'ati proclaimed was heralded by God.⁶⁶ The Abelian system was characterized by the government of the people and not of God's so-called representatives, the ownership of capital by the people and not by a few capitalists, and a peoples' religion unmonopolized by the *rowhaniyat* (clerical institution) or the church.⁶⁷ This was the historical determinism Shari'ati believed in. Individuals, however, endowed

with the freedom of choice, had the right and obligation to choose their camp. Their freedom was not viewed as incompatible with the predetermined movement of history. Shari'ati claimed that individuals could either assist the progressive transformation of history towards the Abelian system or could resist and combat it.⁶⁸

The sociological approach of his Islamic doctrine, Shari'ati claimed was 'once again based on dialectics'.⁶⁹ Arguing that society is a time-specific cross-section of history, Shari'ati extended his historical analysis of the two contradictory camps of Abel and Cain to society. Before reaching its historical objective of unity, society was always divided into two opposing classes. For Shari'ati, all modes of production based on class antagonism and contradictions irrespective of the forces of production appropriate to each, shared a common polarized base: Cainian (oppressor-exploiter) and Abelian (oppressed-exploited). This type of designation readily lent itself to the ahistorical conclusion Shari'ati wished to obtain: 'in an agrarian society in which the tools of production had not changed, the bourgeois class had not emerged, and even industry and capitalism were unheard of, a socialist base meaning public property could come to prevail through a revolution, civil war or a *coup d'état*.'⁷⁰

According to Shari'ati, the transition from an exploiting Cainian system to a non-exploiting Abelian system was attainable through a transformation of property relations from private to communal ownership, irrespective of the development of the forces of production. This Shari'ati called a change in the 'base'.⁷¹ The determining factor of change in his scheme was the will of the people, irrespective of objective economic conditions. History and society, according to Shari'ati, were the theatre of two struggling poles, sometimes called classes. The oppressive or Cainian forces were composed of three aspects or countenances: political repression, economic exploitation and religious stupefaction. Each, he argued, was symbolically represented by a character in the Qur'an.⁷² The oppressed or Abelian forces were composed of the people and God, and in the historical struggle between the two poles God was always on the side of the people.⁷³

Distancing himself from prevalent Islamic notions, Shari'ati explained that the Islamic ideology he was enunciating was radically different from the Islam propagated by the clergy and understood by the people. Using religious symbols, Shari'ati exclaimed that his Islam was that of Abu Zarr and not of Ka'b al-Ahbar. It was not he defiantly declared, the Islam of the clergy (*rowhani*), but that of the Islamic freedom fighters (*mujahed*) concerned with 'social and ideological *jihad* and scientific and rational *ejtehad*'.⁷⁴ Whereas resignation and submission had traditionally and falsely been upheld as the foundation of the Islamic value-system, Shari'ati Islam was not based on 'imitation, resignation and tenacity of belief'.⁷⁵

Shari'ati's ideal society was the *umma*, the Muslim community, a fraternal society based on people's ownership and the absence of surplus extraction and exploitation (*qist*). Realizing that his description closely resembled the classic socialist model, Shari'ati added that, for him, a classless society was not 'an objectiv

as it was for 'Western socialists', but 'a principle!'⁹⁶ His students never asked him what he meant and he did not clarify this rather ambiguous statement any further. Politically, Shari'ati lambasted the democracy of the 'heads in the herd', once again arguing for government by a 'dedicated revolutionary leadership'. The schooling and training of the ideal human being was left to this ideal society.

The ideal human being, armed with the 'Book' (*kitab*), the 'balance' (*tarazu*) and 'iron' (*ahan*) is described as a God-like being in whom the 'spirit of God' has prevailed over Man's basic Satanic mud-like element. The individual steeped in the values of the 'book (the Qur'an) and the balance (justice)', would permanently revolt against the Cainian status quo in order to establish the ideal society. The possession of 'iron', representing military might, paved the way towards the establishment of a just and classless society.⁹⁷ Emphasizing the necessity of armed struggle, Shari'ati declared that without weapons, consciousness and faith alone were incapable of attaining the ideal society.⁹⁸ Outlining the path to absolute individual perfection, Shari'ati dwelt upon the virtue of *isar* or selflessness. He defined a selfless person who pursued a cause and chose death over life as a *shahid* or a martyr.⁹⁹ Selflessness was a call to martyrdom, holy war and bloody revolution. On 14 April 1972, Shari'ati's piercing voice echoed in Ershad and the minds of his students, 'Die! so others may live.'¹⁰⁰ Resigned only to God and rebellious against all forms of coercion and force, the ideal person was invited to take the first step towards the creation of the promised human paradise on earth by revolting against the establishment.

Invoking Arnold Toynbee's non-linear life-cycle of civilizations as an 'outstanding' and 'revolutionary work', Shari'ati strove to prevent the fall of Islam through engaging it in a permanent state of rejuvenation.¹⁰¹ In spite of its irreconcilability with the dialectical and Marxian view of the development of history, which Shari'ati subscribed to, he employed Toynbee's cyclical theory of history to prove a point. He maintained that Toynbee's theory of historical motion applied to religions, doctrines, ideologies, revolutionary movements, societies and nations.¹⁰² Each, he argued, went through a historical period of rise and ascendancy spurred by creativity, offensiveness and vitality, followed by a period of lethargy, defensiveness and decline. Through a permanent process of revival, reinvigoration and rejuvenation of the doctrine, Islam's predetermined decline and fall could be forestalled. He called for the renewal of 'religious outlook' and the propagation of Islam through 'a language that belonged to this age and was suitable for this generation.'¹⁰³ This attempt, he assured his audience, did not imply an alteration of the religion.

Implicitly explaining the purpose of his modern and Islamically-reinterpreted socialist and existentialist ideology, Shari'ati announced that his doctrine was aimed at the modern Muslim who breathed in an intellectual and cultural environment dominated by the triangle of 'Socialism, Existentialism and gnosticism'.¹⁰⁴ A modern Islamic ideology, he declared, should incorporate and surpass those doctrines, providing solutions where they fail. 'One should combine gnosticism and Existentialism with Socialism as an ideology and a socio-economic system, all three

should be incorporated and then left behind to arrive at Islam,' he wrote.¹⁰⁵ Shari'ati claimed that the Shi'ism encapsulated in his ideology was 'superior' to Marxism, humanism and existentialism. Engaged in an ideological *Aufhebung*, Shari'ati wanted to construct an eclectic ideology combining, synthesizing and transcending the progressive ideologies of his time. This was Shari'ati's meta-ideology.

Shari'ati's treatment of Marx and Marxism during his numerous lectures reflected his mixed feelings on his object of analysis. He found Marx's historical stages highly useful and ascribed to them. Yet uneasy with the principle of materialism, he subsequently converted historical materialism into historical determinism. As an idealist, however, he gave a determining role to the individual and his consciousness as the motor of history and therefore found himself at logger heads with Marx's economic determinism. In the absence of objective conditions Shari'ati, who longed to see the implementation of his Islamic socialism in Iran, was forced to rely on subjective voluntarism for the attainment of his ideal.

Shari'ati's survey of Marx and Marxism at Ershad, although highly favourable and even acclamatory, is far from learned or even accurate. Shari'ati attributed Marx's anti-religious position to a so-called love affair in his youth – with a young girl he wished to marry, but could not because Christian priests forbade the marriage of the pious girl to the irreligious Marx!¹⁰⁶ In his long series of lectures on Marx and Marxism, Shari'ati attempted to reinterpret and present a simulacrum of even Marxism. Whatever he did not appreciate in Marxism, he immediately attributed to Stalin, who was to Marxism what Mohammad-Baqer Majlesi was to Safavid Shi'ism.

In his treatment of Marxism, Shari'ati categorically denied that Marx ever believed in historical materialism or the determining role of the productive force and material conditions of life.¹⁰⁷ In two revisionist statements, he announced that 'scientific Marxism is not based on materialism' and that the 'dictatorship of the proletariat is an anti-Marxist thesis'.¹⁰⁸ Attributing unknown concepts to Marxism, Shari'ati presented them as if they were commonly accepted Marxist categories. To free himself from the economic determinism of Marxism, and prove that social consciousness could become an independent variable, he argued that the structure or the infra-structure was determined by social praxis, itself shaped by a synthesis of sensibility and action.¹⁰⁹ Shari'ati readily concluded that Marxism had replaced materialism and idealism with a concept called 'pratico-sensible'.¹¹ Finally, suggesting his ignorance of Marx's important and well known writings on the subject of colonialism¹¹¹ Shari'ati falsely accused him of having completely neglected the concept and reproached him for having remained absolutely silent on the significance and consequences of colonialism.¹¹² Yet Shari'ati's own references to books on Marxism during his stay in Paris, shed considerable doubt on such a simple conclusion.¹¹³ It is conceivable that Shari'ati knew of these writings but did not wish to associate anti-colonialism with Marx or Marxist analysts.

On 11 February 1972, Shari'ati identified the target of his lectures as the 'students, the intellectuals and the young and pure theological students, who are thirsting

for new ideas.¹¹⁴ By September 1972, or some seven months later, he felt secure enough in having won over the initial group that he had focused on to address them as his fellow intellectuals. He told them that they were 'the only group in society with whom he shared the same ideas and the same sense of responsibility.'¹¹⁵ In his lectures, and during his regular interaction with his students, Shari'ati could correctly perceive the close personal and ideological bond that was being established between himself and his audience. He therefore proudly referred to a 'new intellectual group, trend and faction' with an established doctrine, identity and world outlook,¹¹⁶ claiming that the birth of this 'truth' was felt by all and that it was enjoying its ascendancy.¹¹⁷ He took pride in proclaiming that his only comrades in arms were his students, from whom he expected the greatest degree of selflessness in the pursuit of their common cause.¹¹⁸

Celebrating the successful stage of educating his students, Shari'ati invited them to embark on the next phase. 'We must enter into action,' he announced.¹¹⁹ The action he referred to was double-edged: preaching like Zeinab and resisting injustice like Imam Hossein. The responsible and engaged religious intellectual, the modern-day messenger, was called upon to propagate, publicize and disseminate the new Islamic doctrine learnt at Ershad.¹²⁰ With the intellectuals as his able ambassadors and propagandists, Shari'ati could broaden his audience and widen his ideological base, preparing the field for the great transformation. He identified six groups among whom propaganda work should be conducted: international public opinion, the international Islamic community, domestic urban masses, domestic rural masses, Iranian women and finally children.¹²¹ He informed his audience that their task was to reinterpret and simplify the doctrine and the key Islamic ideas they had learnt at Ershad in order to communicate it to the lowest common denominator.¹²² Wishing to see the sprawl of his doctrine, without much concern for receiving credit for it, and also worried about the animosity towards himself by certain religious and irreligious modernist intellectual factions, Shari'ati pleaded with his students not to give any references to him when they propagated his modern Islamic message.¹²³

Fully aware of the dangers of his programme of indoctrination at Ershad, and conscious of the fact that his devout students may opt for another type of action, more bloody than preaching, he recounted the present through a story of the distant past. Shari'ati took his students for another inter-temporal journey. Feeling as though he had finished his task of awakening, politicizing and inculcating his audience, he pushed them towards the inevitable and final stage of their politico-educational experience. Invoking Abu Zarr, the rebellious role model of all times, Shari'ati reminded his students at one of his last lectures that, 'No blood is ever shed in vain and death in a righteous and just cause never leads to extinction. An honest voice may be repressed but never extinguished.'¹²⁴ By the time Ershad was closed and Shari'ati silenced, a modernist, radical and utopian Islamic paradigm was born and the nucleus of its devoted cadres were formed.

Insurrectionary Discourse

'This is the time to make a move'

Swept by the rapid unfolding of events and the revolutionary environment that had come to prevail among the politicized youth, Shari'ati accelerated the pace of his frequently-stated stages of political evolution. Like many intellectual revolutionaries before him who in tranquil times condemn blind activism and voluntarism and are subsequently jolted by the pace of events and yield to the revolutionary atmosphere, Shari'ati's discourse became more radical, pungent and fiery. Recognizing the exceptional circumstances, on 10 March 1972, just before the Iranian new year, he said to his students: 'We are living in a transitional stage and if anyone wants to do anything, this is the time to make one's move ... do not forget there is not much more time left.' At Ershad, Shari'ati continually argued that the role of the intellectual was that of explaining, analysing and presenting a picture of socio-political and economic realities. Once this task was accomplished, the masses, he argued, would automatically respond. In theory, the time necessary to prepare the masses was a mere detail. But in the heat of the moment and against the backdrop of self-sacrificing revolutionary acts, theoretical formulations paled as the prospect of shaming the regime and effecting rapid political change gained momentum. His insurrectionary lectures reflect Shari'ati's sense of urgency, the feeling that the hour and the golden opportunity had to be seized. They were intended as a potent jab to incite and instigate not only intellectuals, but the people to rise and revolt.

The revolution Shari'ati sought to ferment was politico-religious. Through revolutionizing Shi'ism, the battle was effectively won. Shi'i Islam constituted the most deeply-felt common denominator among Iranians – the nervous system of the Iranian body politic. The stimuli and impulses transmitted through it would mobilize the entire population and thus bring about a socio-political transformation. Shi'i Islam, however, possessed its own well-established rites, rituals, traditions, history, language, symbols, heroes, enemies, jurists, books of reference and interpreters of what constituted Islamic and non-Islamic practices and ideas. Shari'ati's Herculean task was to gradually undermine and eventually demolish, one by one, the classical or the traditionally accepted associations between Islamic concepts, their meaning and their practice.

Ahmad Kasravi had only engaged in the destructive stage; Shari'ati's responsi-

bility was to deconstruct, reconfigure and reconstruct. His raw material was a ritualistic, superstitious and politically acquiescent Islam which had for centuries made its peace with the status quo. It was quietist, and sought no more than public respect in this world and felicity in the hereafter. Shari'ati's end-product was to be a revolutionary Islam concerned with worldly affairs and capable of challenging the status quo. This reawakened Islam had to be armed with slogans which incorporated the most lofty ideals offered by contemporary ideologies. The alchemy, however, had to be based on an Islamic process and firm Islamic tenets. The ideas enunciated in Shari'ati's insurrectionary speeches were mostly revamped, and more developed, versions of his academic lectures. Seldom could a completely novel idea be found in them.

Shari'ati's insurrectionary speeches were, for the most part, tightly clustered together and reserved for the Iranian month of Aban. It seems unlikely that their timing, recurrence and intensity was incidental or accidental. For two successive years, the Islamic mourning month of Moharram coincided with Aban which, during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi had its own significance – the shah's birthday was on 4 Aban and that of the crown prince's on 9 Aban. Remaining faithful to his image of the lone indignant contestor, Shari'ati made a point of lambasting all aspects of the entire system on which the monarchy was based on the same days that official Iran was paying tribute to the shah and the shah-to-be.

The first cluster of insurrectionary speeches including; 'Longing, the religion of protest' ('Entezar mazhab-e e'teraz'), 'Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism' ('Tashayo' alavi va tashayo' Safavi'), 'The responsibility of a Shi'a' ('Masuliyat-e Shi'a budan'), 'Yes, this is the way it was brother' ('Aree inchoonin bud baradar') and 'Father, mother we stand accused' ('Pedar, madar, ma motahamim') began on the 8 Aban 1350 (29 October 1971) and was spread across eleven nights. The volley began some fifteen days after the end of the shah's celebrations of Iran's 2,500 years of monarchy. This first cluster of speeches, especially their flagship, 'Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism' could be classified as 'religiously subversive', bordering on heresy. They were primarily directed at the clerical establishment, their epistemological bases and arguments, their understanding and practice of Islam, the authenticity of their legal references and the lucidity and reliability of their jurists.

The second important cluster, which were openly subversive lectures, were also delivered during the month of Aban. Lasting for five nights, the series included 'Shi'ism: the complete party' ('Shi'i hezb-e kamel'), 'A message of hope to the responsible intellectual' ('Payam-e omid be rowshanfekr-e masul') and 'Oppressors, renegades and traitors' ('Qasetin, mareqin va nakesin'). Twelve days after the last of these lectures, and still during Aban, Ershad was closed down and Shari'ati's voice silenced. These 'politically subversive' lectures, especially 'Shi'i a complete party' are a virulent attack on the regime, an open eulogy to the Mojahedin, an invitation to rebellion and a guide to clandestine and revolutionary organization and action.

Shari'ati delivered three more emotional, yet isolated, insurrectionary lectures, each on a particular political occasion: 'Martyrdom' ('Shahadat') on 25 February

1972, after the revolutionary suicide of Ahmad Reza'i and the death sentence of the Mojahedin's founders; 'After Martyrdom' ('Pas az shahadat') less than three weeks later, on the occasion of the execution of several members of the Marxist Fada'ian; and 'The revolutionary role of reminiscing and reminiscers' ('Naqsh-e enqelabi-ye yad va yadavaran'), on 12 September 1972, five days after the execution of Mehdi Reza'i, a member of the Mojahedin. Symbolically, Shari'ati called this last lecture a complement and a supplement to his lecture, 'Martyrdom'.

These insurrectionary speeches evoked the passionate allocutions of charismatic leaders, apostles or evangelists who incited their audience to revolt against injustice and wrongdoing. Shari'ati's attack was not on one or another aspect of the existing state of affairs. It was a general assault on all existing institutions; the shah's regime, relations of dominance and dependence fostered by imperialism, the prevalent capitalist economic system, the class-ridden social system, the domination of Western liberal culture, the prevalent traditional and clerically defined concept of Islam and finally the clerical institution. This was Shari'ati's kamikaze. Before reaching the end of his ultimately suicidal path, Shari'ati was pressed to seize the opportunity that had been presented to him; the right to call for a revolution, albeit in a thinly veiled fashion, in a country which had never, except in three very short periods of its history allowed, tolerated or overlooked anything close to it.

Religious Subversion

To produce his religious simulacrum, Shari'ati engaged in the art of rewriting and reinterpretation until centuries-old and well-established words and concepts were totally emptied of their traditional meaning and given a new signification and purpose. His point of departure in his discourse was the identification of a dichotomy between actually existing Shi'ism and ideal or authentic Shi'ism. By referring to actually existing Shi'ism as a historical aberration, he could explain its failures, incapacities and, most importantly its historical complicity with the status quo. Actually existing Shi'ism, he argued, was a most important crutch supporting the ruling classes. The schism within the Islamic community was initiated by the clergy's treacherous act of abandoning the people and siding with the powers of the status quo against the masses.² However, Shari'ati accompanied his rejection and negation of actually existing Islam with the glorification of the authentic Islam.

Shari'ati's simultaneous condemnation and glorification of Islam made life difficult for the clergy. They could not outright condemn him as an apostate as was done with Kasravi. Yet as his clerical detractors came to realize, Shari'ati was far more dangerous than Kasravi, since he was laying claim to the mantle of authentic Islam. Kasravi was an insider turned outsider. His war was that of an apostate against the house of Islam. Claiming to be an insider, Shari'ati was accusing the clergy, or the hosts of the house, of becoming outsiders. Shari'ati presented him-

self as the saviour of Shi'ism waging a just ideological war against the deviant and corrupt usurpers of the message of the Prophet, Ali and Hossein. He intended to forge an alliance between the repressed and the liberation ideology of Islam. Having defined the socio-political and economic system of what he believed to be the authentic and liberating Islam, he gradually defined the values, mores, traditions and responsibilities of an authentic Muslim in the modern world. Creating symbols and slogans, identifying heroes and enemies, Shari'ati built a comprehensive Islamic doctrine, challenging the religio-political status quo.

Shari'ati argued that Shi'ism was in need of permanent reinvigoration or revolution. The key to its ability to remain a viable socio-political doctrine, capable of responding to the needs of the modern man, was in the employment of three concepts: *ejtehad* or independent judgement, *amr-e beh ma'ruf va nahy-ye az monkar*, or commanding people to do good and forbidding them from doing the evil, and *mohajerat* or emigration. With the evocation and redefinition of each concept Shari'ati began his task of placing old Islamic concepts in a new light.³ Implicitly claiming the right to exercise *ejtehad*, he used the traditional religious framework and tool-box to cast religious principles, concepts and practices in the revolutionary and modernist mould he desired.

Shari'ati used the concept of *ejtehad* as a dynamic intellectual process, keeping Islam abreast with modern developments. *Ejtehad*, an accepted practice among the Shi'a, implied the application of human reason and rationality by those who were Islamic jurists. Trying to free *ejtehad* from the monopoly of the clergy, Shari'ati started by redefining the *mojtahed*, or person who has the right to exercise *ejtehad*. Although the term *mojtahed* is synonymous with a cleric in Persian, Shari'ati argued that a *mojtahed* was a 'responsible' and 'free researcher' who sought new solutions on the basis of 'the spirit and orientation of religion, its scientific logic and the four legal sources of the Shari'a, namely, the Qur'an, tradition, consensus and reason.'⁴ Limiting *ejtehad* to socio-politically responsible and active people effectively excluded the great majority of clerics from exercising their right. By including the spirit and orientation of religion as a basis on which interpretations should be made, Shari'ati liberated the Islamic interpreter from remaining within the rigid confines of traditional formulations. By making no reference to the need for the *mojtahed* to be a cleric, he not only paved the way for the Islamic justification of his own interpretations, but also for those Islamic intellectuals who knew their faith but were not members of the clergy. Shari'ati argued that the application of 'free *ejtehad*' in legal, economic and social domains guaranteed the concurrent evolution and modernization of religion.⁵ His invocation of *ejtehad* as a principle that revolutionized Islam, allowed him to reconstruct his conception of the authentic Islam on the basis of his own rationality. Calling for the application of *ejtehad*, or the renovation of ideas in the 'understanding of the Qur'an', 'the analysis of beliefs' and 'the analysis of interpretations', gave him the opportunity to challenge existing Islam in its entirety.⁶ In the lecture, 'Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism', he applied his own 'free *ejtehad*' to discern between two antagonistically contradictory Shi'isms and Islams.⁷ His 'religion of the people' represented 'absolute

beauty and good' while Safavid Shi'ism, or the monarcho-clerical religion, represented 'absolute ugliness and evil'.

Dividing Islam into two distinct chronological phases, Shari'ati argued that at first Shi'ism constituted an oppositional force challenging the ruling system and its repressive institutions. This insurrectionary Shi'ism he called Ali's Shi'ism. The movement of Imam Ali's Shi'ism had a specific objective. 'All things and all people' were means to the attainment of this movement's objective; 'the changing of the existing system'.⁸ During this stage, Shi'ism was intent on 'destroying' everything and replacing it with 'novel conditions'. Shi'ism's second phase began with the Safavid dynasty when it became the official state religion. The revolutionary movement became counter-revolutionary and 'actually existing' Islam was born. Shi'ism became an institution, the clergy representing it became active members of the ruling class and defenders of the status quo. This reactionary Shi'ism, which became an accomplice to the heinous acts of the kings, was called Safavid Shi'ism.⁹ The same process occurred in Sunni Islam. The first or revolutionary phase of Sunni Islam was called Mohammad's Sunnism (*tasanon-e Mohammadi*), whereas the counter-revolutionary phase was called Ummayad Sunnism (*tasanon-e Ummavi*).

Making a sacrilegious statement from the point of view of the traditional Shi'i clergy, Shari'ati argued that while Ali's Shi'ism was similar to Mohammad's Sunnism, Safavid Shi'ism was identical to the Ummayad Sunnism.¹⁰ The first pair sought to destroy the status quo and implement a popular socio-political Islamic system of equality and freedom based on the abolition of dictatorship, colonialism, economic exploitation and the official clerical institution.¹¹ They represented 'popular Islam'.¹² The second pair, operating through the official clergy, were upholders of the rule of the enemies of the people. Their objective was to reconcile religion with 'authoritarian and corrupt monarchies', and 'their atrocious acts of murder'.¹³ They represented 'governmental Islam'.¹⁴ Shifting the traditional Shi'i and Sunni conflict into another domain, Shari'ati argued that rapprochement between Ali's Shi'ism and Mohammad's Sunnism was natural since they followed the same objective and shared the same direction.¹⁵ He ascribed the fratricidal hatred between the Sunnis and the Shi'is to the clerical representatives of Safavid Shi'ism and Ummayad Sunnism.¹⁶

Shari'ati argued that the jurists and *ulama* of Safavid Shi'ism had joined the ruling class, guaranteeing the rule of the monarchy and, therefore, their own power. To provide an Islamic justification for monarchies and to whitewash their unjust practices, Safavid jurists, deceived the masses by engaging in the fabrication and falsification of reports of the words, deeds and acknowledgements of the Shi'i Imams. Attacking the indisputable sources and references of the Shi'i clergy as forgery and fake was a daring act. Shari'ati demonstrated how each of these fabrications served different purposes, while their ultimate objective remained that of stupefying the people and keeping them in political and social ignorance.

Referring to a *hadith* cited in Mohammad-Baqer Majlesi's *Bahar al-Anwar* on the marriage between Imam Hossein and Shahrbanu, the daughter of Yazdegerd,

the last king of the Sasanid dynasty, Shari'ati argued that Safavid clergy tried to fuse the concept of monarchy with that of the religious rule of the Shi'i imams. Arguing that the fourth Imam was the son of the fusion between the house of Ali, representing religious rule, and the Sasanid dynasty representing monarchical rule, Shari'ati concluded that Majlesi, the epitome of Safavid clerics, had eternalized Shi'a-supported monarchies.¹⁷ He moreover rejected the *hadith* as a falsification, demonstrating that although it was also reported in another major Shi'i reference, Kolehini's *Usul-e Kafi*, it was 'nonsensical' and in contradiction with 'historical evidence and the spirit of Islam'.¹⁸ Engaging in the technical exercise of authenticating the chain of transmission of the *hadith*, he argued that the two individuals who had reported the events were of dubious and unsound character. One had the reputation of a liar and a falsifier, and the other was untrustworthy because he was known for his 'suspicious and questionable religious beliefs'.¹⁹ Questioning the validity and authenticity of reports in other reputable Shi'i references such as Borujerdi Kazemeini's *Javaher al-Velayeh* and the works of Sheikh Ali-Akbar Nahavandi, Shari'ati demonstrated that the Safavid clerics also engaged in falsifications to prove that the monarchy was blessed by God, the imams sought favours from unjust rulers, the imams engaged in cowardly acts of dissimulation to save their lives, the imams eulogized the 'murderous, corrupt, usurper and unjust caliphs'.²⁰ Travelling between the past and the present as he always did, Shari'ati lashed out at the quietism and conservatism of Iran's clerics. While the 'materialists fought selflessly for their beliefs and played with death, Safavid Shi'ism and its clerics continued to flatter [the powers to be] and represented Shi'i imams as weaklings who begged and wailed for their freedom from prison'.²¹ Casting doubt on the professional ability and intention as well as the class bias and orientation of some of the most important clerics of traditional Shi'i Islam and their quasi-sacred books, Shari'ati was challenging the whole clerical institution.

The task of the Safavid clergy, according to Shari'ati, was not only the legitimization of the monarchy's unjust rule, but the distraction and diversion of the peoples' attention from the source of their problems, namely the triad of dictatorship, exploitation and stupefaction.²² Safavid clerics sought to transform religion into a metaphysical entity unrelated to the affairs of this world. The less the people thought about their condition and predicament in this world, the weaker the possibility of threatening the class interests of the clergy and their ruling allies. Shari'ati argued that the depoliticization of religion was a major task of Safavid clerics. The transformation of Shi'ism from a religion invoking rebellion and bloodletting to an opiate of the masses was the major task of the Safavid clerics.²³

The process of distracting the people, according to Shari'ati, was systematically carried out on two levels. First, the Safavid clerics tried to busy the population with a contrived fratricidal war against the Sunnis. They induced the fanatical love or idolizing of the imams among the people and propagated the concept of imam worshipping.²⁴ Their campaign to idolize the imams necessitated a perverse exercise in exaggeration and superstition. For example, it is reported that Imam Ali had the power to transform a man into a dog, or Imam Reza could bring to life

the painting of a lion and have it eat someone.²⁵ Concurrently, they vilified and slandered the caliphs as enemies of the House of Ali. Channelling and steering the dammed up energy and emotion of the people against the Sunnis, Safavid clerics succeeded in preventing them from knowing the real Ali. According to Shari'ati, the people's exposure to Ali's ideology would induce them to revolt against the unjust regimes.²⁶ So long as the masses manifested their love of Ali by slaughtering Sunnis, the clergy and their class allies could rule in peace.

Second, by emphasizing the personal and individual aspects and ordinances of faith, the Safavid clerics effectively and intentionally abandoned and relinquished the social aspects of Islam.²⁷ Instead of 'becoming involved in politics', Shari'ati wrote, Safavid jurists and clerics focused on writing about 'menstruation, ejaculation, the rituals of going to the toilet, ordinances concerning slavery and the responsibilities of the slave to the slave owner'.²⁸ By keeping away from issues with the slightest socio-political implication, they steered clear of trouble with kings. Wherever the clear ordinances of the faith contradicted the profitable practices of their class allies, Safavid jurists would rule against the basic tenets of the faith and in favour of the unjust ruling regime.²⁹ Engaging in legal tricks (*hiyal va kolah-e shar'i*) or whitewashing, effectively an exercise in 'deceiving God', Shari'ati argued that in their hands, usury or *riba*, prohibited in Islam became legitimized as commerce.³⁰ With the intention of diverting people's attention from Islam's socio-political concerns and objectives, they relied on 'deviationary and negatory religious interpretations'.³¹ Shari'ati argued that Safavid clerics distorted and misrepresented revolutionary Shi'i concepts to minimize the threat of Ali's Shi'ism to their own power. Monarchies and unjust Islamic regimes were founded on a fundamental contradiction. According to Shari'ati, Safavid clerics were charged with the task of maintaining a 'reactionary system' rooted in political dictatorship and class exploitation on the infrastructure of a 'revolutionary doctrine' steeped in 'justice' and revolutionary leadership'.³² Their perverse explanation of concepts and acts was therefore an outcome of the attempt to superimpose reactionary Safavid Shi'ism on the revolutionary Shi'ism of Ali.

To attain their objective of rearing a pusillanimous, irresponsible and harmless society, Safavid clerics, replaced the principles of *jihad*, *ejtehad*, and protestation, with their distorted definition of *taqiyyeh* (dissimulation out of fear for one's life), *taqlid* (imitation) and longing.³³ To assure the perpetual subservience and subordination of the people, they defined *taqlid* as blind imitation of clerics. This obligation demanded absolute and unswerving acceptance of and allegiance to the reasoning, opinions and edicts of the clerics.³⁴ In Safavid Shi'ism, *taqiyyeh* was made into a 'principle of the faith' and defined as 'silence before all evils, deviations and aggressions of the ruling power in order to secure one's health, job and life.' On the basis of this principle, Safavid clerics called upon Muslims to steer away from 'headaches, problems, dangers and losses' resulting from acting according to one's 'beliefs and responsibilities'. It thus called for quietism and the 'absolute abandonment of the struggle'.³⁵ Longing for the hidden Imam, therefore called for the acceptance of prevailing socio-political and economic conditions, until social

degradation necessitated the appearance of the Imam. The end of the occultation period was divinely determined. Before the predetermined date, Safavid clerics considered action and the struggle for the implementation of a just society as futile. The Safavid concept of longing, thus justified tolerating corrupt, repressive and unjust regimes.³⁶ The 'black magic' of Safavid clerics, according to Shari'ati, was that they first distorted the concepts of *taqlid*, *taqiyeh* and longing and then elevated their warped interpretations to indisputable principles of Shi'ism. Safavid jurists elaborated a political philosophy of reactionary conservatism, divinely justifying the people's blind obedience to the rule of the king and the clerical institution.

Reinterpreting the concepts of imitation, dissimulation and longing, Shari'ati tried to assemble the elements necessary for replacing this 'reactionary system' with a 'revolutionary system'. Reversing the practice of Safavid jurists, he turned the same Islamic concepts against the interest of the clergy and the status quo. By politicizing religious terms, he transformed them into modern revolutionary tools and tactics necessary for the survival of armed and clandestine organizations fighting the regime. Shari'ati's redefinition of imitation went through two phases. First, he tried to minimize and limit the religious domain to which it could be applied. Shari'ati argued that 'imitation' was limited to practical and legal affairs, of a technical and specialized nature. In Ali's Shi'ism, he argued, 'imitation could be practiced only in edicts and minute ancillaries of *foru' al-din* and not in the principles of the faith or in beliefs.'³⁷

Ten months later, as he became more politically radical, openly supporting the cause of the Mojahedin, Shari'ati argued that imitation in Imam Ali's Shi'ism, was a tactical obligation in times of clandestine revolutionary struggle. For when political conditions necessitated the clandestine activities of the leadership of a movement, along with underground communications and propaganda, inquisitiveness and questioning was dangerous and uncalled for.³⁸ Once an order was received from a trustworthy leadership, immediate and blind obedience was necessary for the successful operation of a clandestine revolutionary organization. In contrast to the Safavid concept of the term, Shari'ati claimed that imitation made sense only as a tactical tool in revolutionary warfare. The organizational imitation or obedience of the revolutionary was not an 'irresponsible abdication of his reasoning' but a 'socio-organizational' obligation practised by responsible and selfless *mojaheds*.³⁹ During this period Shari'ati regularly used the term *mojahed*, one who engages in holy war. His reference to its various grammatical constructions was intended as a repetitive reference to the Mojahedin Organization.

Dissimulation according to Ali's Shi'ism, was also a tactical concept which fulfilled a double purpose, guaranteeing unity in the face of a common enemy and assuring the safety and security of members of a clandestine revolutionary organization. Shari'ati's concept of dissimulation in the face of a common enemy is a call for unity among Muslims. But it is also an appeal to the more controversial and important tactical alliance between Muslims and non-Muslims fighting the regime. Shari'ati's emphasis on the importance of 'common objectives' and the

dissimulation of differences in the face of 'the enemy', was a call to the tactical alliance of the Muslim Mojahedin and the Marxist Fada'ian.⁴⁰ The second purpose of dissimulation, according to Shari'ati, was to oblige individuals in a clandestine organization waging war against the regime to swear to secrecy. Concealing the secrets of the organization, Shari'ati argued, would prevent massacres of the revolutionaries. Dissimulation, according to Ali's Shi'ism was not an invitation to quietism and inactivity, but a means of safeguarding the fighting power, organization and life of the guerillas, thereby assuring the success of their struggle.⁴¹ Shari'ati also referred to dissimulation as the code of secrecy and concealment employed by a Mojahed, struggling in a clandestine organization against the regime.⁴²

Longing, analysed positively and from the perspective of Ali's Shi'ism, Shari'ati argued, was the firm belief in an approaching liberating revolution on a world scale. The appearance of the hidden Imam was synonymous with the promised social revolution which guaranteed a Golden Age of justice, equality and truth for the repressed masses.⁴³ Waiting passively for the promised day, Shari'ati argued was meaningless, since it could happen 'tomorrow or at any other instant'. The task of the true Muslim was, therefore, to be on a constant and perpetual state of alert. The responsible Shi'i had to prepare himself by training with his 'flag, sword and armour'.⁴⁴ The outcome of the battle, according to Shari'ati, was predetermined. Labelling it 'historical determinism', Shari'ati stated the victory of the oppressed of the world and the founding of a 'classless society' as God's irrefutable will.⁴⁵ The picture Shari'ati presented of a longing Muslim, was that of an armed well-trained guerilla ready to wage war.⁴⁶ Shari'ati intentionally concluded his definition of longing, by adding that waiting generated 'a responsibility and an obligation' to 'object to the status quo and negate the ruling systems and values'.⁴⁷ Clearly the means of negating the status quo and the ruling system by a well trained and well armed clandestine organization in which individuals were obliged to 'revolutionary obedience' and 'sworn to organizational secrecy', in tactical alliance with other revolutionary organizations, was only through active revolutionary warfare. Even though Shari'ati did not directly call for open war, his constructions were such that his disciples could easily read between the lines.

Having demonstrated the socio-political bankruptcy of Safavid or actually existing Shi'ism, Shari'ati further discredited the clergy by using the image of Imam Hossein for the purpose of undermining the rule of Safavid Shi'ism. Hossein whom the clergy had made into an abstract code-word for the purpose of soliciting tears on special religious occasions, was suddenly converted into an ever present revolutionary role model, permanently calling on Muslims to rally against injustice and repression. Having gravely wounded and destabilized the role and purpose of the clergy with his religiously subversive insurrectionary lectures, Shari'ati had to speed-up the process of armed struggle against the regime through his politically subversive insurrectionary speeches.

Political Subversion

Shari'ati used *ejtehad* as the Islamically acceptable medium for transforming Safavid Shi'ism to Ali's Shi'ism. In a similar vein, Shari'ati used the Islamic concepts of *amr-e beh ma'ruf va nahy-ye az monkar* or commanding people to do good and forbidding them from doing evil and *mohajerat* or emigration, to promote political subversion. Commanding people to do good and forbidding them from doing evil was the magic wand, awakening and galvanizing the dormant, subjugated and the unenlightened. Emigration, as had been practised by the Prophet, defined as a dual process of; rebellion against the status quo and the degenerated socio-religious past, as well as, a conscious movement towards an ideal, was the guarantor of final victory.⁴⁸

According to Shari'ati, in Islam, commanding people to do good and forbidding them from doing evil was a 'social responsibility' incumbent upon all individuals.⁴⁹ At the hand of the traditional clerics this concept had been primarily limited to the realm of private religious practices. Shari'ati's formulation, however, was essentially concerned with the application of this concept to the socio-political realm. The contemporary implication or manifestation of forbidding socio-political evil, Shari'ati argued, was struggling against 'international imperialism', 'world Zionism', clerical 'stupefaction', 'colonialism and neo-colonialism', 'exploitation', 'dictatorship', 'class contradictions', 'racism', 'cultural imperialism' and 'Westoxication'. Referring to the Safavid clerics, Shari'ati commented that under the present circumstances, anyone who spoke of forbidding any lesser evils, was only trying to deceive the people.⁵⁰

Outlining the responsibilities of 'Ali's Shi'a', Shari'ati identified the duties people should be commanded to fulfill; opposing falsehood and evil, even at the cost of their lives; believing in an on-going historical movement based on a divine doctrine aimed at liberating humanity; accepting justice as a world outlook; thinking and practising on the basis of the Qur'an and the Tradition of the Prophet and the imams; struggling against repression, oppression, class society, exploitation, expediency, savagery and whatever enfeebles, humiliates, alienates or stupefies the people; working, worshipping and wielding the sword like Ali; exercising revolution and martyrdom; seeking to implement an egalitarian society based on a just and revolutionary leadership.⁵¹

Having dethroned the clergy as the sole interpreters of Islam, Shari'ati now claimed that 'commanding good and forbidding evil' was not in the clergy's monopoly, but a 'collective responsibility'.⁵² He argued that, like praying and fasting, 'commanding good and forbidding evil' in the socio-political realm constituted an obligation on every Muslim as soon as the age of maturity was reached.⁵³ Emphasizing the importance of this obligation, Shari'ati argued that it should not be treated merely as advice. It was a firm and binding commandment and prohibition, secured and backed up by force. Based on a simultaneous process of affirmation and negation, Shari'ati argued that it was impossible to command people to justice without combatting injustice and evil-doing.⁵⁴

Sketching the sequence of events, Shari'ati provided the contours of his revolutionary programme. In symbolic, yet vivid terms he argued that 'destruction' preceded 'construction'. A liberating monotheism would prevail only after the annihilation of all polytheistic idols.⁵⁵ Evoking Mohammad's tradition of holding the 'book' in one hand and the 'sword' in another, Shari'ati openly invited Muslims to restore a just society by wielding the 'axe' and the 'sword'.⁵⁶ Shari'ati was clearly skipping his sequential stages of the propagation of the message preceding the automatic uprising of the people. Here, he was arguing for a simultaneous socio-political process of the message and the sword.⁵⁷ The propagation of the revolutionary message, opposing and attacking the class interests of the ruling classes, without the power of the sword was similar to an inoffensive and ineffective advice or recommendation. On two major issues, Shari'ati's position during his 'insurrectionary phase', differed from his previous position. First, he came to believe in the necessity of armed struggle to demonstrate the frailty of the regime and eventually to implement his Islamic doctrine. Second, he had either lost his faith in the automatic uprising of the masses or had come to believe that they needed to be led and guided by a 'small revolutionary group'. Similar to all intellectuals turned revolutionary, Shari'ati came to believe that confronted with a repressive regime and in the absence of popular revolutionary consciousness, 'political power grew out of the barrel of the gun' of a small selfless vanguard. The time had come for Shari'ati to shift from elaborating a revolutionary Islamic doctrine, to outlining the responsibilities and tasks of the revolutionary vanguard organization. Commanding good and forbidding evil, Shari'ati argued, had two modern implications or manifestations; political leadership and insurrection. Imam Hossein's uprising at Karbala was an application of this principle.⁵⁸

The Complete Shi'i Party

The first political manifesto issued and signed by the Iranian Peoples' Mojahedin Organization, commencing with the phrase, 'In the name of God and the heroic people of Iran', became public in mid-February of 1972.⁵⁹ The political radicalization of Shari'ati's position and the hardening of his insurrectionary discourse dates back to, 'Martyrdom', delivered on 25 February 1972. Within the eight months until the closure of Ershad, Shari'ati came to consider the socio-political action of the Mojahedin as a role model worthy of emulation by all responsible Muslim intellectuals. Abandoning his veiled and symbolic language and in unequivocal terms, the last cluster of Shari'ati's insurrectionary speeches, openly praised the path, course of action and revolutionary strength and dedication of the Mojahedin. Intentionally playing on words, Shari'ati claimed that the Qur'an not only spoke about, but even swore by the Mojahedin, those armed horseback riders.⁶⁰ Directly referring to them in name, playing on and evoking the name of their founders, such as Hanifnejad and using their terminology such as *khalq* rather than *mardom* for the word people or masses, Shari'ati sent a simple signal to his

audience. He hinted, if not clearly suggested, that responsible Muslim intellectuals steeped in his revolutionary Islamic ideology would, if not should, opt for the Mojahedin's method of struggle.

The passion play in which Shari'ati's gifted oratory at Ershad generated high emotions of revolutionary consequence, took a new twist. The enchanter was enchanted. Shari'ati who had galvanized his young audience was charmed and stimulated by the daily courageous acts of the Mojahedin in particular and all guerilla activists in general. His passion and masterly narratives came to reflect the cause of the Mojahedin, not necessarily as an organization, but as a group of self-sacrificing and upright Muslims resisting injustice. The Mojahedin, steeped in a revolutionary Islamic doctrine, represented what Shari'ati had always longed for. Witnessing the unfolding of a modern saga, Shari'ati the romantic was indisputably influenced and inspired by the Mojahedin's Hossein-like revolutionary poise, gallantry, methods, objectives, organization, strategy and tactics. Moved by their unswerving dedication and the romantic-cum-revolutionary conditions in Iran, Shari'ati made a dramatic rupture with his previously-held step-by-step concept of revolutionary theory succeeded by revolutionary practice.

Shari'ati openly claimed that the epoch was one of 'revolution' and not of 'intellectual disputes'. The revolution was to be a bloody and virulent struggle until 'the annihilation of the triad' of private property, autocratic monarchy and the clerical institution.⁶¹ Muslim intellectuals were urged to assume their historical responsibility of leadership, engaging in the socio-political obligation of commanding good and forbidding evil. Hedging against the accusation of prematurity, Shari'ati argued that those who revolt against unjust regimes, would be guided by God.⁶² With the Mojahedin model in mind, Shari'ati called on the Islamic community to form a 'special and socially responsible group from within itself.'⁶³ This group was called the finest of the Islamic community (*ummat-e bartar*). Its members were characterized as being responsible, God worshipping, selfless, combative, perpetually on alert and having rebelled for the people's cause. Having realized that acquiescence before any unjust bloodletting was an act of collaboration with murderers, they spent their lives in holy war.⁶⁴ Minimizing the importance of the initial operational setbacks of the Mojahedin, Shari'ati argued that even though the first steps taken by the rebels may be 'premature', God would assist them in their cause 'as long as they waged holy war until their last breath'.⁶⁵ Speaking the language of a revolutionary militant, Shari'ati brushed aside the 'danger of death' as a minor price in the pursuit of human felicity and perfection.⁶⁶

As a newly converted voluntarist, Shari'ati upheld the 'revolutionary group' which had rebelled for the 'liberation of the people' as a perfect model. His process of radicalization started first from the rejection of political small-talk in intellectual circles. He stressed the notion that theoretical or ideological education for the establishment of justice had to culminate in revolutionary action.⁶⁷ To justify his new position, Shari'ati engaged in his typical inter-temporal and inter-spatial comparisons. He drew a parallel between the political situation of the followers of Imam Ali after the election of Abu Bakr at Saqifah, which he referred

to as a coup d'état and the prevailing political conditions in Iran. Having been denied the possibility of open and organized political struggle against the ruling classes which had monopolized power, Shari'ati argued, the oppressed classes were obliged to turn to 'popular, clandestine and unconventional' warfare.⁶⁸

Shari'ati's call to revolution was not based on his faith in military success. Inviting his disciples to revolt against the shah's regime, Shari'ati explained that Imam Hossein had struck the first blow against a regime identical to that of the shah, with the full knowledge that he would not defeat the enemy. As if defining the shah's regime, he characterized Mo'awiya's rule as 'a hereditary, profligate, anti-popular and anti-Islamic regime'.⁶⁹ Hossein's purpose in challenging this regime by sacrificing his own life was to expose, put to shame and humiliate it while sensitizing others to the prevalent conditions. Consciously chosen martyrdom was but an exercise in enlightening the masses. Yet the means had changed from expression through words to the employment of weapons. Under the very thin veil of extolling the guerilla movement of the Sarbedariyeh, Shari'ati called for a 'bloody battle' against despotism and colonialism.⁷⁰

In an approving if not acclamatory tone, Shari'ati indirectly referred to the Mojahedin's urban guerilla operations and explained how 'a strike or a blow' was an ideological lesson and an invitation to the people.⁷¹ Justifying and legitimizing the cause of revolutionary action as practised by the Mojahedin, Shari'ati recounted that 'the armed mojahed', questioned by the people on his choice of armed revolutionary struggle, would answer, 'we have come to liberate you from bondage, degradation and the injustice of religions'.⁷²

Confronted with the revolutionary activities and appeal of Marxist guerillas, Shari'ati had to clarify his position on the relation between the two revolutionary forces. Indirectly referring to the Marxist urban guerillas, Shari'ati commended the un-Islamic groups fighting for the cause of the people and blessed them as more dear to God than those pious believers who shied away from performing their social responsibility of serving the people.⁷³ Tactically, therefore, Shari'ati viewed the Marxist guerillas as an immediate ally against the common enemy. They shared the same socio-political and economic objectives, yet differed on the essential philosophical issue of God. Both had chosen the same path of struggle for the same people or *khalq*. Shari'ati declared that the main struggle was not between Muslims and unbelievers, but between Muslims and the oppressors.⁷⁴ In a *fatwa*-like proclamation against the Shah's regime, Shari'ati publicly declared that those who killed the warriors, struggling for the implementation of equality and justice were apostates, unbelievers and enemies of God.⁷⁵

For the purpose of long term strategy, however, Shari'ati readily acknowledged that the only group truly capable of rebelling for the people's cause against all anti-human forces was one which 'believed in God'. Shari'ati maintained that 'it is the upright God worshipper who can be the authentic humanitarian and the sincere liberationist'.⁷⁶ As the self-presumed ideologue of an Islamic revolutionary movement which had been put into practice by the Mojahedin, Shari'ati was naturally their partisan. He invited radical intellectuals to compare the Fada'ian which

he called 'the atheistic *mojahedin*' with the *Mojahedin* which he called 'the pious *mojahedin*'.⁷⁷ Feeding on the infinite source of belief in 'God' and 'resurrection', Shari'ati argued that in pursuit of their socio-religious responsibility Muslim forces comprehended and accepted death so readily that in choosing it they did not even need to be induced by such feelings as heroism.⁷⁸

Characterizing the *Mojahedin* as the cream of the Islamic community (*ummat-e bartar*), Shari'ati sought to prove that they had formed the ideal Shi'i political party. The derivation of the concept of a modern political party from Islamic literature and its application to a clandestine guerilla force needed yet another linguistic reinterpretation. Shari'ati argued that the term *ummat* or Islamic community used in the Qur'an was analogous to the modern concept of a [revolutionary political] party.⁷⁹ Referring to the *Mojahedin* as the selected Islamic community which had joined the people (*khalq*), Shari'ati maintained that the Organization was the equivalent of an organized and responsible political party.⁸⁰ The ideology of this party which determined the goods to which people should be commanded and the evils from which they should be forbidden, was very similar to that of Shari'ati's. In general it was a revolutionary invitation to 'salvation' or a call for the implementation of a socio-economic system based on 'equality, justice and freedom'.⁸¹ The particulars of this ideology which Shari'ati promoted and the *Mojahedin* practised was based on struggle, jihad, revolutionary puritanism, the people's rule, hierarchical leadership during the revolutionary stage, organizational obedience, a classless society and the abolition of, private property, private accumulation of capital and exploitation. Shari'ati's ideology guided, stirred and mobilized the intellectuals while the *Mojahedin* produced intellectual warriors (*mojaheds*).⁸²

Carried away with the idea of publicly discussing the operation of a guerilla organization in the guise of a Shi'i party, Shari'ati promised to outline its appropriate strategy, tactics, structural organization and decision-making process.⁸³ In his speech 'Shi'ism the complete party', Shari'ati demonstrated that during certain periods, Shi'ites had opted for armed struggle as their main strategy. However, he reminded his audience that Shi'i Imams, as leaders of the struggle, had a non-dogmatic and flexible strategy of struggle, adaptable to the times, circumstances and prevalent conditions. Their strategies varied from conventional war, to clandestine armed struggle, from silence to intellectual debates, from academic pursuits to the propagation of just ideas.

Identifying 'permanent struggle against the oppressive ruling regime' as the main axis of the party's strategy, Shari'ati emphasized the necessity of a two-tier battle; an ideological war against the clerical upholders of the regime and a political war against despotism and exploitation.⁸⁴ This was similar to the strategy of religious and political subversion that he had employed at Ershad. As for tactics, using the language of a military officer, Shari'ati proposed that in the process of implementing the main strategy, respective commanders of combat units engaged in the operational theatre, should be given latitude to determine appropriate tactics.⁸⁵

Finally, on the issue of leadership, Shari'ati opined that during the occultation of the Imam, 'conscious Shi'ite people' were responsible for electing the most just and learned person to lead them through their struggle.⁸⁶ This conditional concept of a popularly elected leader also constituted an important development in Shari'ati's political theory. Shari'ati had always toyed with the idea of election. Initially, he expressed unconditional approval for revolutionary leadership and 'directed democracy', where leadership was innate and the leader would naturally emerge.⁸⁷ Exactly a year before his support for a popularly elected leader, Shari'ati had argued that during the period of occultation, only the 'clergy and the religious ulama' would have the right to choose the leader.⁸⁸ In his last speech at Ershad and after a year of bitter disputes with the clergy, Shari'ati went on record voicing his support for a popularly elected election, with no reference to the necessity of people's relegation of their responsibility to the clergy. A narrow interpretation of his words would, however, imply that the electorate was limited to the Shi'i community.

Shari'ati's religiously and politically subversive and insurrectionary discourse, conducted in an open and candid manner, was a veritable declaration of war against the regime. Here, was a man who was publicly calling for the annihilation of capitalism, imperialism, the clerical institution and monarchy in the Shi'ite Imperial Kingdom of his Majesty the Shahanshah of Iran. Shari'ati could hope, but could not realistically believe, that the divine powers that had assisted him in his religious-political crusade up to this point would continue to blind and render deaf his two major foes, the regime and the Safavid clergy.

Cultivating Martyrs

'When the people get a chance, they will retake what is theirs'

The relationship between Shari'ati, the state and the security apparatus, was complex and ambiguous. Shari'ati was no stranger to the Third Bureau of SAVAK, also called the Bureau of Internal Security or *Edareh-e Amniyat-e Dakheli*. His last round of interrogations and 'interviews' only dated back to July 1968. He had been summoned to Mashhad's SAVAK headquarters on a number of occasions and had been questioned by both Attarpur and Sabeti in Tehran. Having initially banned his public lectures at various universities and subsequently rescinded its decision, it seemed as if SAVAK could not make up its mind on what to do with him. The fact that it ordered that he should not teach at Mashhad University is an indication of its disquiet and disapproval of his possible 'subversive' influence on his students. But forbidding Shari'ati to teach at Mashhad yet allowing him to lecture at Ershad is yet another reflection of SAVAK's contradictory positions on Shari'ati. At some point in time SAVAK must have felt that it could capitalize on certain aspects of Shari'ati's discourse.

SAVAK was not a monolithic organization. Its different, and at times contradictory, positions and policies reflected clashes of opinion within its leadership, let alone within its bureaus and regional headquarters. There is evidence of rivalries between the head of SAVAK, General Nasiri and the deputy head, General Fardust¹ and rumours have always circulated about important disagreements on approach and policies between Generals Moqaddam and Nasiri. After November 1970 a special committee was set up in SAVAK's Third Bureau to deal with student unrest which tracked down and played a determining role in the arrest of the Siahkal group. A similar committee was set up in the Police after 1971. After rivalries between these two so-called anti-terrorist committees led to armed confrontations in the streets of Tehran, the shah ordered the creation of 'The Joint anti-Sabotage Committee' composed of the Police, Gendarmerie and SAVAK.² The mandate of this super-committee was to track down and repress mushrooming urban guerilla activities. The birth of this committee, however, created further disagreements between the three forces that composed it. Each branch vied to impress and endear itself to the shah, who was only interested in the quick and

radical elimination of the urban guerilla movement that not only threatened the stability of his rule but embarrassed him internationally.

From its inception, SAVAK was obsessed with the communist and Soviet threat to the internal security of the country. It was only natural that after Siahkal and the advent of widespread urban guerilla operations, revolutionary Marxists would be considered as 'public enemy number one'. Identifying the guerilla communist groups as their main target, SAVAK was not interested in Islamic organizations until August 1971, when thirty-five members of the Mojahedin were arrested. It was during their trials in February 1972 that their Islamic and Marxian ideology, and the threat of a revolutionary Islamic ideology combining the Qur'an with the works of Marx and Lenin, became clear to the authorities. Nine months later, Ershad was closed down.

For long, SAVAK had been criticized for its inability to conduct an ideological campaign against the Marxists.³ Given the popularity of Shari'ati's Islamic discourse among the students, it is probable that certain elements in its Third Bureau came to believe that this was just the ideology they sought. Shari'ati's discourse was modern, polemical and radical, if not revolutionary. It was, therefore, attractive to the intellectual youth. Its initial emphasis on theoretical work and laying the intellectual groundwork rather than on activism was probably an additional plus for the security forces. At the same time, since his lectures were described as Islamic, the security forces must have assumed them to be anti-materialist and, therefore, ultimately anti-Marxist. The public and open, albeit highly scrutinized and controlled, presentation and elaboration of a radical socio-political Islamic discourse was probably viewed by a group within SAVAK as a useful diversionary tactic which could, if successful, ultimately reverse the powerful revolutionary Marxian tide among politicized urban intellectuals. A faction within SAVAK must have believed that by tolerating Shari'ati's public and open meetings in Tehran, it was defusing the armed and revolutionary zeal of discontented intellectuals and channeling their energy into heated discussion and debate.

It seems that SAVAK was ready to tolerate Shari'ati's activities as long as they could achieve two main objectives: firstly, prevent the young from choosing the path of armed resistance and, secondly, present and popularize an Islamic discourse that could undermine and overshadow the ascendant Marxist discourse. The former consideration was probably of greater immediate importance. The fact that Shari'ati's political position and discourse was a double edged sword was almost certainly clear to at least some SAVAK officials; but because his activities were overt the security forces could keep a close and watchful eye on him. In Tehran, SAVAK must have felt certain of its ability to keep Ershad and its activities under close surveillance.

From 1968, Ershad's Board of Directors were officially instructed by the Shemiran branch of SAVAK to send, on a regular basis, the names of all speakers and tape recordings of their lectures to that office.⁴ The tapes were supposed to be carefully monitored by that office and any damaging statement or comment, along

with a summary of the lectures, was to be reported to the headquarters of the Third Bureau. After the closure of Ershad, Kamali (alias Jamali), an operative mainly in charge of religious political prisoners at the Third Bureau, is reported to have said that in fact neither the content nor the summary of the tapes recorded at Ershad, including Ali Shari'ati's speeches, were ever reported to the headquarters of the Third Bureau. The only reports sent by Shemiran's SAVAK indicated that things were quite normal at Ershad.⁵ In retrospect, such an important oversight can only be explained either by a belief among SAVAK agencies in general that religious activity was inconsequential, or by the incompetence and indolence of its personnel.

While Shari'ati taught at Mashhad, the slightest comment which might be construed as an insult to the shah was meticulously observed and reported by the local SAVAK office. Shari'ati was regularly called in and questioned about his statements.⁶ Given that the Shemiran office did not carry out its responsibility, it is not surprising that there is no trace of SAVAK's reaction to many of Shari'ati's loaded and provocative statements at Ershad. Had anyone with the slightest knowledge or familiarity with Marxist jargon and terminology listened to his first and second lessons on 'Eslamshenasi', they would have realized that Shari'ati's Islamic ideology was very much influenced by Marxism.

In Rowhani's book against Shari'ati, which is based on SAVAK files, there is no reference to reports on him between February 1970 and March 1972.⁷ The first document, dated 9 May 1972, is a report of an 'interview' which indicates that Shari'ati was interrogated after a directive was issued to this effect on 6 April 1972. Sabeti's comment on the report suggests that the directive probably came from him. In a letter to his wife after his expulsion from Mashhad University and his transfer to the Ministry of Higher Education in Tehran, Shari'ati mentions numerous occasions on which he was summoned to SAVAK headquarters. Referring to it as the 'Main Office', he wrote that he had been 'advised, briefed and preached at' and that 'for the hundredth time' SAVAK had asked him for another biography or personal account (*sharh-e hal*).⁸

SAVAK's revived interest in 'interviewing' Shari'ati after some two years was probably not entirely due to his activities at Ershad. On 14 March 1972 he had delivered a highly charged speech, 'After martyrdom', at the Narmak mosque on the heels of two series of executions, on 1 March and 12 March. Shari'ati's friends, Masud and Majid Ahmadzadeh and four of his old students at Mashhad University, Hamid Tavakoli, Bahman Ajang, Gholamreza Galavi and Sa'id Aryan, of whom he had many a moving memories, were among those who faced the firing squad. In the course of his speech, which happened to fall on the last days of the emotive month of Moharram, Shari'ati's voice trembled with grief, repeating at times the same lines, as though his agile mind could not liberate itself from the tragedy. Shari'ati referred to the executed men as martyrs who he once again cast in the image of Imam Hossein and spoke of 'unjust, repressive and murderous governments'.⁹ The speech shattered any illusions that SAVAK may have harboured about

Shari'ati. Instead of rejecting armed struggle and continuing his emphasis on theoretical analysis, he claimed that 'every revolution is composed of two aspects, first, that of blood and second, that of the message'.¹⁰ He not only eulogized armed struggle, but by blessing Marxist guerillas as martyrs made it clear that, for him, the people's cause which had induced the Marxist Fada'ian to take up arms was the cause of God.

Shari'ati lashed out at those who hung on to their insignificant and petty lives and argued that the times were not ripe.¹¹ Shari'ati, coined his classical slogan that, 'the martyr is the pulsating heart of history'. Invoking *Moharram*, *Ashura* and *Karbala*, as the prevailing socio-historical condition in Iran, he said, 'every month of the year is Moharram, every day of the month Ashura and every piece of land Karbala'.¹² 'Those who died,' he concluded, 'performed a Hossein-like act, and those who lived should live like Zeinab [propagate the message] or else they will be akin to Yazid, [the murderer of Imam Hossein]'.¹³ At the end of his speech, the crowd inside the mosque turned off the lights and started chanting anti-shah slogans. Fearing a raid by the police, everyone left in the dark while one of Shari'ati's many admirers helped him get away and provided him with lodging until the next day.¹⁴

'After Martyrdom', was the first clear signal to SAVAK that its calculations about Shari'ati and his 'pacifying role' were faulty. Because the speech was delivered at the Narmak mosque and not Ershad the authorities must have heard of its content and the whole chain reaction must have been set off. It is probably at this time that Shari'ati was constantly called to SAVAK for 'interviews'. Sabeti's comment on the long report written by Shari'ati's interrogator after an interview is most revealing. Feeling that his own employees were being manipulated by Shari'ati, Sabeti's position hardened. In response to the interrogator's recommendation that Shari'ati should be allowed to teach at universities in Tehran, Sabeti responded curtly; 'If he is in favour of propagating Islam, he should speak against Marxism and materialism. He has to clearly indicate his position, [he is] either on this side or the other. His lectures should be of some use to the youth and the general welfare of the country. He should at least lecture a few times against Marxism and materialism so that we can determine that he is not deceitful and mendacious'.¹⁵

On 26 June 1972, Shari'ati was summoned to SAVAK where an operative informed him of Sabeti's instructions: he was to provide them with a transcribed copy of his anti-Marxist and anti-materialist speeches.¹⁶ Two weeks after the deadline that Shari'ati had been given, the same operative informed his superiors that there was no news of him.¹⁷ A review of Shari'ati's lectures after his 'interview' with SAVAK on 26 June indicates that he did make a point of attacking Marxism while trying to salvage the most fundamental aspects of it, such as the dialectical movement of history, by proclaiming such concepts as fundamentally Islamic.¹⁸ In the five post-'interview' lectures in which he dealt with Marxism or aspects of it, he never failed to condemn the adverse social effects of capitalism, political repression and clerical stupefaction. While continuously praising a classless socialist system, on numerous occasions Shari'ati tried to find fault with Marxist

arguments, theories and predictions.

In a shrewd general statement, at the beginning of the class during which he launched his restrained criticism of Marxism, Shari'ati pointed out that 'independent intellectuals with Marxist tendencies and beliefs are in the best position to analyse, criticize and reform Marxism.'¹⁹ During different lectures criticizing Marxism and Marxist analysis he argued that Marx's historical stages were not universal and hence the Iranian or Turkish bourgeoisie were different from their European counterparts; that Marx's predictions on the demise of capitalism had failed to materialize; that Marx had not reflected on the issue of colonialism (sic); that Marx had not predicted the transformation of competitive capitalism into conciliatory capitalism; that Western socialism was bourgeois socialism; that materialism was based on dogmatism; that the rise of Fascism in Germany at a time when everyone expected a socialist revolution negated Marxism and, finally, that those who adopted Marxism as a rigid dogma failed to understand the contemporary problems of the world.²⁰

Shari'ati ended his series of lectures on Marxism by pointing to the failure of Marxist predictions of a proletarian revolution in Europe. Indirectly, he implied that the reasons delaying the revolution in Europe made a revolution in less developed and semi-colonized countries such as Iran ever more imminent. Presenting a 'Third-Worldist' analysis of why the revolution had been postponed in Europe, he argued that the working class in Europe had become 'embourgeoisified' and were no longer revolutionary, while the capitalist class had become 'rational'. The underlying material cause of the two pacifying processes in Europe, he argued was the pillage and the ever increasing misery of the Third World.²¹ Shari'ati engaged in a false criticism of Marxist analysis by arguing that Marx was unaware of colonialism. It is conceivable that, had he acknowledged Marx's or Marxist writings on colonialism, he could not have passed his own Leninist and 'dependency-school-based' analysis as an anti-Marxist discourse. Whatever the case, instead of concluding that revolutionary conditions did not exist in Iran, as the regime would have wanted, he implied that revolutionary conditions could not exist in Europe as long as there was no anti-imperialist revolution in Iran. Shari'ati spoke against Marxism using Marxian ideas. Instead of speaking against armed struggle, even in his lectures on '*Eslamshenasi*' he increasingly referred to the righteousness of shedding blood and dying for a just cause.²²

On the basis of a chronological analysis of Shari'ati's speeches, it is evident that his speech, 'After Martyrdom', created problems for him. Whether he was officially banned from lecturing or speaking outside Ershad, is not clear. Yet it is a fact that beyond his Ershad classes on *Eslamshenasi*, Shari'ati did not give any public lectures for six months. His next public lecture at Ershad, 'Reminiscing the Reminisces' was on the occasion of Mehdi Reza'i's execution.

Ershad: the Revolutionary Beehive

Shari'ati's increasingly defiant and insurrectionary discourse at a time when the regime was besieged by both a Marxist and an Islamic guerilla movement seemed sufficient reason for SAVAK to silence him. But in addition, at this time any illusions SAVAK may have harboured about Ershad as a centre through which intellectuals could be 'saved' from the path of armed struggle, were entirely dashed from another direction. The waves of arrest of the Mojahedin, immediately followed by long and tortuous interrogations, exposed the extent of their miscalculation. It emerged that Ershad was being used as a safe haven by sympathizers and members of the Mojahedin for their political contacts and encounters. Under the guise of attending Shari'ati's lectures or participating in cultural activities, rendezvous and meetings, at times leading to revolutionary activities, were arranged there.

Ershad in 1971 and 1972 provided a sanctuary in which dissident intellectuals and potential revolutionaries experienced a sense of solidarity. Indeed the mere act of attending the institution was itself considered an anti-regime act; it was also the first step towards active struggle against the regime. In a society where information on clandestine revolutionary activities was extremely difficult to obtain, it became an information centre where revolutionary tracts and news of the activities and well being of the Mojahedin were regularly distributed. People who went there in this period still remember Mahmonir Reza'i, the mother of Ahmad and Reza, along with other Mojahedin sympathizers, hurling leaflets from the balcony where the women sat. Ershad also acted as a recruiting ground for the Mojahedin and was frequented by its members.²³ The names of a good number of future militant Mojaheds, executed or killed in street battles could be found among the students who attended Shari'ati's lectures, while confessions extracted from a considerable number of those arrested after the Autumn of 1971 state that they learnt about the organization and established contact with it through Ershad.²⁴ Shari'ati's book, *Abu Zarr, the God Worshipping Socialist* was even on the reading list of the Organization.²⁵

For many Iranian revolutionaries, the transitional process from political discontent to radical political consciousness, and finally to armed revolutionary struggle, was undeniably facilitated and accelerated by Shari'ati's lectures and writings. But although he knew certain members of the Mojahedin, there is no proof that he himself knew of the organization or its activities prior to the arrests of its members in late August of 1971.

Mansur Bazargan, one of the original members of the Mojahedin, knew Shari'ati from Mashhad and had very high regard for him. They had met both at the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths and, later in 1956, at the Peikar Literary Circle. In 1966, when the Mojahedin were busy developing their ideology, Bazargan, eager to introduce Shari'ati to Mohammad Hanifnejad, tried to arrange a meeting between them. Hanifnejad was known for his punctuality and showed up at the

home of Bazargan's parents at the scheduled time. They waited for Shari'ati for more than a hour and when he failed to appear Hanifnejad commented that one could not do serious business with this man.²⁶ Bazargan tried to arrange a second meeting between Shari'ati and another group of his friends, among them sympathizers and members of the Mojahedin; but again Shari'ati left them waiting.²⁷ Shari'ati seems to have learnt of the existence of the organization only after the arrest of their leaders, when he sent word to them in prison inquiring about what he could do for them.²⁸

Without a premeditated plan, however, it seemed as if Shari'ati and the Mojahedin had synchronized their activities. Shari'ati's lectures sensitized and then politicized his audience. His laudatory references to the Mojahedin were sometimes coded and veiled and sometimes open and transparent. A chronological study of Shari'ati's lectures demonstrates how he gradually guided his students towards either the cause of armed struggle based on an Islamic ideology, or that of an overt invitation to resistance and confrontation with the status quo in all its aspects. At some point, Shari'ati's more sensitive, passionate and active students felt that his lectures no longer satisfied their thirst for anti-regime political engagements. The moment they decided to take up arms, abandoning public life and choosing clandestinity, Shari'ati passed on the torch to the Mojahedin.

Joining the Mojahedin, after having received a revolutionary Islamic ideology from Shari'ati seemed the most logical and natural course for many of Shari'ati's students. Those who did not choose armed struggle became the messengers of Shari'ati's ideology, preparing others, some of whom naturally opted for armed struggle. The extent to which Shari'ati was personally involved with encouraging particular individuals to join the Mojahedin is, however, unclear. Since he had no organizational ties with them, it would have been impossible for him to act as an intermediary.

Simin Jariri was an active, sensitive, intelligent and passionate attendant of Shari'ati's lectures at Ershad. She had already obtained her BA in biology and taught at a school called Khosrow Khavar. She did not wear the veil nor a head scarf. At first, she was completely enchanted by Shari'ati's ideas and his lectures.²⁹ However, in the summer of 1972 she approached him and informed him that his lectures were becoming monotonous and repetitive (his tenth lesson on *Eslamshenasi*, delivered on 28 April 1972, is a classical example of a rambling and repetitious lecture). Furthermore, Jariri informed Shari'ati that she was fed up with theoretical discussions and had become interested in revolutionary activities. In the Autumn of 1972, Shari'ati introduced her to Puran Bazargan, whom he knew had connections with the Mojahedin Organization. Jariri joined the organization officially soon after, started her clandestine life as an urban guerilla, became a Marxist after the internal ideological schisms in the organization and was subsequently killed in a street battle. Her process of politicization is particularly interesting, since unlike many other students whose religious upbringing had caused them to frequent Ershad and subsequently join the Mojahedin, she neither came from a religiously-

inclined school, nor had any close relatives who were associated with or sympathizers of the Mojahedin.

Ershad itself was fed by a number of well-known religiously oriented high-schools. Prominent among them were the Alavi boys school and the Refah girls school in Tehran, where many of the teachers as well as the students had Shari'ati tendencies ever since 1968. The work that made an important impression on this generation of students and popularized Shari'ati at this time was Abu Zarr, the God-worshipping Socialist. As early as 1969, the newspaper *Payam-e Ma*, handwritten by the radical students at Alavi and posted on the walls, included an article by Shari'ati.³⁰ Students and teachers at two other religiously-inclined schools in Tehran with links to Bazargan's Iran Freedom Movement, Kamal and Qods, also had close ties with Ershad. Parviz Khorsand, who was from Mashhad and became very dear to Shari'ati after his return from Paris, taught at Kamal. So did Hassan Aladpush, who had himself studied at Alavi. Hassan Aladpush was a regular attendant at Ershad and was also personally very close to Shari'ati. Mahbubeh Motahedin, the daughter of Shari'ati's close friend Kazem was also a graduate of Refah and later taught there. Mahbubeh was always present at Shari'ati's lectures and classes. At the marriage of Hassan Aladpush and Mahbubeh, it was Shari'ati who performed the religious rites. Later, the couple joined the Mojahedin, went underground, kept in touch with Shari'ati, sided with the Marxists in the organization's ideological schism and died in a bloody confrontation with the security forces. Shari'ati's love and admiration for this couple reached mythical levels and was reflected in a piece that he wrote about them after their death. Describing them as true practitioners of Islam's philosophy of martyrdom, he eulogized them as symbols of Islamic values and revolutionary puritanism.³¹ Through Sherkat-e Samarqand, an architectural and construction company, Hassan Aladpush, an architect by profession, was also associated with Abdol-Ali Bazargan (Mehdi Bazargan's son) and a young admirer of Shari'ati and an attendant of Ershad, by the name of Mir-Hossein Musavi. Whenever Shari'ati wished to take a break from his work, he would visit his friends at Sherkat-e Samarqand.

Leila Zomorodian, another Refah graduate who also attended Shari'ati's lectures at Ershad, joined the Mojahedin and had a faith similar to Mahbubeh Motahedin. Until his arrest in 1971, however, Mansur Bazargan, one of the original members of the Mojahedin frequented Ershad and kept in touch with Shari'ati. Puran Bazargan, Mansur's sister and the first female member of the Mojahedin, who also frequented Ershad after the first wave of arrest of the Mojahedin, was the principal of Refah from 1969 to 1973. Fatemeh Amini, Puran Bazargan's sister-in-law, also a teacher at Refah, remained in contact with Shari'ati until the beginning of her clandestine life as a Mojahed in the summer of 1974. After the closure of Ershad, Meisami, a member of the Mojahedin, who had been released from prison in Shiraz and carried a message from the Mojahedin prisoners for Shari'ati, established contact with him in his hideout in Tehran through Fatemeh Amini.³² Fatemeh Amini was captured in February 1975 and died under torture.

In a letter to his father, Mojtaba Taleqani, Ayatollah Mahmud Taleqani's son, explained how and why he became involved with Shari'ati, Ershad, the Mojahedin and finally its Marxist off-shoot. Sections of this letter shed light on the process of radicalization of young Iranian intellectuals and the key role played in that process by Shari'ati's lectures. Mojtaba Taleqani had himself attended both Alavi and Kamal and was attracted by Shari'ati's activities at Ershad before joining the Mojahedin. He wrote:

I believed in the ideas expressed in the court speeches of the Mojahedin and in the book *Shenakht*. At the same time, I did not care much for the religious rituals and the selfish parochialism found at the Alavi School. The general atmosphere of the Alavi School was also extremely anti-communist. Anyway, I was soon attracted to militant Islam – especially when Shari'ati and others began to analyse Islam in a different way (of course, this trend had been started earlier by the engineer Bazargan). But once the first excitement began to wear off, I realized that their teaching could not show me the true road and illuminate the main problems of the struggle. Many others who felt as I did continued to remain active within the Hosseiniyeh Ershad. At the time I could not understand why people who thought very much like me continued in their old ways, ways that I no longer considered to be truly militant ... It was then that the armed struggle and the organization began. This was to be the main turning-point for many who thought like me. The appearance of an organization whose ideology was both Marxist and Islamic naturally appealed to me.³³

With the small exception of those who had come into contact with the Mojahedin through relatives or friends at university, a significant number of Mojahedin recruits were first drawn to Shari'ati's lectures or books sometime between their final years at high school and their first few years at university. Momken recalled that in June 1977, at Qasr prison, those political prisoners with Islamic tendencies, among whom the Mojahedin constituted a majority, recounted their indebtedness to Shari'ati and his role in attracting them to political activism and Islamic revolutionary groups.³⁴ The biography of a significant number of the martyr's of the Mojahedin's second generation, or those who joined the organization after 1972, indicates that Shari'ati's books or lectures constituted the first and a determining step towards their radicalization.³⁵ Major Ali Mohebi who joined the Mojahedin, went underground in 1976 and was killed in a street-battle with the police during the same year, recalled that he started his socio-political studies with the works of Shari'ati, and this drove him towards activism and challenging the status quo.³⁶ The interrogations of those Islamic political prisoners arrested after 1972 demonstrate that SAVAK was highly sensitive to and intent on finding whether the detainees knew Shari'ati or had frequented Ershad.³⁷

On 27 August 1972, a month and a half before the closure of Ershad, facing a military tribunal and charged with armed rebellion against the state, Mehdi Reza'i, the legendary nineteen-year-old Mojahed, was asked about the books which had influenced him to choose the path of armed struggle. It is said that he mentioned three authors: Khomeini, Jaleleddin Farsi and Shari'ati.³⁸ Interestingly enough, at

the time, only Shari'ati was in Iran. Reza'i had specifically mentioned Shari'ati's book *Martyrdom*. Shari'ati had delivered this speech in the honour of Ahmad Reza'i, the Mojahedin's first martyr and Mehdi's elder brother. Once 'The Joint anti-Sabotage Committee' realized that Shari'ati's increasingly militant speeches prepared and encouraged his audience to join the Mojahedin and that Ershad had subsequently become a breeding ground for urban guerillas, no time was wasted in closing it down. Identified as the public sanctuary as well as the first ideological school of a significant and highly dedicated guerilla force, Ershad had to be dismantled.

Another line of explanation, holding the anti-Shari'ati clerics responsible for the closure of Ershad and the imprisonment of Shari'ati exists. Ershad, the argument goes, was closed after the shah's visit to Shiraz in October 1972. Certain influential members of the clergy, are said to have given Shari'ati's speech, 'Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism' to the shah and had asked him to silence its author.³⁹ The son of a highly influential clergyman is also said to have played a key role in the closing of Ershad.⁴⁰ On the occasion of the official ceremonies (*salam*) celebrating the Iranian new year of 1973, the shah is said to have met with two high-ranking clerics and warned them against the danger of Wahhabism and communism threatening Islam and Iran. He is reported to have added that the closure of Ershad, Hedayat and al-Javad were related to these dangers.⁴¹ Ne'mat Mirzazadeh recalled that, while in prison, Nasser Nowzari (alias Rasuli) a chief interrogator of SAVAK had explained the reason for Shari'ati's imprisonment. According to Rasuli, Shari'ati's imprisonment was subsequent to a letter written by the very highest ranking clerics to the shah accusing Shari'ati of combatting Islam and breeding Islamic Marxists, a term used for the Mojahedin. The anti-Shari'ati high ranking clergy are said to have enclosed Shari'ati's 'Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism' as proof of their contentions.⁴²

A different source presents a similar explanation. Ali Amini, an ex-prime minister recalls conversations he had with both the shah and Asadollah Alam, the powerful court minister, after Shari'ati's arrest. Amini approached the shah in an effort to obtain the freedom of both Ali and Mohammad-Taqi from prison.⁴³ He recalls receiving from the shah the ambiguous response that, 'it was a big mistake' and that he was unaware of Mohammad-Taqi's arrest. Alam, in turn, had referred to their imprisonment as the outcome of, 'a fight between the clerics (*akhondha*)'. Amini had retorted that a fight between modernist and traditional clerics was in the interest of the regime and added that they should be allowed to continue. Alam's response is unknown. The conversation between the two men then moved to a 'committee' which, according to Alam, had been established to study Shari'ati's works. Amini's curt response was that he did not believe that such a committee [established at SAVAK] would have the insight and capacity to understand Shari'ati's books. The closely resembling positions of Alam and the authorities at SAVAK on the involvement of the clergy in Shari'ati's arrest, indicates the regime's official explanation. Based on Ayatollah Milani's close ties with Alam and indirectly with

the shah, and in view of Milani's active opposition to Shari'ati, it might be hypothesized that the case made against Shari'ati before the Iranian authorities was presented by Milani to Alam. Some two months after Shari'ati's arrest, Milani asked Alam to use his influence with the shah to secure the release from prison in Iraq of his own son, who had been arrested on the charge of possessing opium. Once informed of the situation, the shah ordered Alam to take immediate action for the release of Milani's son in Iraq.⁴⁴

Ahmad-Reza Karimi, a regular attendant at Ershad who later joined the Mojahedin, was captured after the Iranian revolution and, accused of turning informant and collaborator, was put on trial. During his hearings it was alleged that he was placed in charge of the committee established by SAVAK to analyse Shari'ati's works. One of the charges against him was that his analysis of Shari'ati's ideas in 'Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism' had resulted in the closure of Ershad. In his own defence, Karimi recalled that Mehdi Bazargan had heard from Salur and Salur from Sharif-Emami, an ex-prime minister and the powerful president of the Senate at the time, that having read 'Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism', the shah had personally ordered the ban on the book and the closure of Ershad.⁴⁵

Some of these arguments place considerable emphasis on the role of the clergy in the closure of Ershad and in Shari'ati's arrest. They convey the message that Ershad and Shari'ati were not considered to be politically destabilizing and thus a threat to SAVAK, but that SAVAK was prompted to close down Ershad for 'religious' reasons. The closure is in this way presented as the culmination of a religious war between traditionalist and modernist factions, into which the shah and SAVAK were 'innocently' dragged. The fact that Ershad was closed only some two and a half months after Milani's first *fatwa* and a couple of days after Rowhani and Tabataba'i Qomi's respondiums gives credence to this theory. Yet single-cause explanations are in this case simplistic.

Shari'ati was both surprised and indignant at the attacks against him by Ayatollah Milani and Ebrahim Milani. The Milanis were from Khorasan and had fairly close ties with the Shari'ati family. In his letter to Ebrahim Milani, Shari'ati addressed him as his old friend and companion, yet accused him of playing an important role in mobilizing the *velayati* group against him. Discrediting the *velayati* group as a pawn in the hands of the establishment, Shari'ati argued that back in 1957, on the basis of a Qur'anic verse, it was Milani who had presented a pro-monarchy political interpretation of the notion of *velayat*, the authority that demanded obedience. Ebrahim Milani's exegesis, broadcast on Tehran Radio, bestowed the authority to demand religious obedience on the *ulu al-amr* – those who were vested with political authority – or in other words the shah.⁴⁶ In his letter, Shari'ati implied that the *velayati* campaign was a religious ploy orchestrated by the regime. In a letter to Ayatollah Milani, he referred to the fact that Milani had handed his anti-Shari'ati *fatwa* to the Iranian undersecretary of War.⁴⁷ After the closure of Ershad, Shari'ati cast Ayatollah Milani in the role of Sir Seyyed Ahmad Khan of India and himself in that of Eqbal and drew a parallel between

the 'Muslim League' and Ershad. In an introduction to a fictitious letter which he ascribed to Eqbal's companions, he illustrated how Milani, who was a progressive Islamic figure at first, was gradually transformed into a paid agent and subsequently a staunch supporter of the regime and its colonial masters.⁴⁸ After giving him credit for his support of the anti-colonial cause of Mosaddeq during, and even after, the oil nationalization movement, Shari'ati argued that Milani, like his Indian counterpart, later betrayed the cause of the people by serving the interests of reaction, despotism, capitalism and colonialism in the name of Islam.⁴⁹ This was the Islam of the *velayatis*. In a letter to his father, Shari'ati lamented that Gurvitch, his Jewish ex-communist sociology teacher in Paris, 'who had spent all his life fighting against Fascism, Stalinist dictatorship and French colonialism in Algeria, was closer to the spirit of Shi'ism than Ayatollah Milani, whose *'fatwas* have always been schismatic and divisive'.⁵⁰

If it is assumed that the struggle between the two religious tendencies weakened the traditionalists, and that the shah's regime was in favour of consistently reducing the power of the clergy and their religious control over the people, would it not have been in the interest of the regime to allow the quarrel to continue? The activities of the anti-Shari'ati clerics did, undoubtedly, provide an opportune pretext for SAVAK's intervention; but it is most improbable that it constituted the sole, let alone the main cause for the closure of Ershad and the imprisonment of Shari'ati. It would be safe to say that the political danger of the chain reaction that Shari'ati was creating at Ershad was the primary cause of the closure. Without Ershad, Shari'ati's public voice was silenced, his role as a political and religious agitator harnessed and the bridge between the institution and the Mojahedin severed. While anti-Shari'ati clerics did play a role in the closure, their part in his imprisonment is less evident. Even though SAVAK and high level Iranian officials presented the matter as the work of the traditional clergy, his arrest most probably resulted from SAVAK's fear of the growing influence of his work among the young and their subsequent attraction to armed struggle. After the execution of the Mojahedin's founders, SAVAK must have become concerned about Shari'ati's rising 'status' as their ideological and spiritual mentor.

Shari'ati, while in hiding, opined that the closure had been the work of both the 'security forces' and the 'sources of imitation'.⁵¹ Even Rowhani, Shari'ati's foe, who wishes to prove that he was a puppet of the shah's regime is forced to conclude grudgingly that SAVAK was obliged to close Ershad because Shari'ati's activities had, 'converted Ershad into a base for the recruitment of communists and monafeqin [Mojahedin]'.⁵²

The Closure of Ershad

On Friday 10 November 1972 (19 Aban 1351) Shari'ati delivered his last lecture at Ershad. It was on existentialism. The opening of this last public lecture is clearly

marked by anxiety and disquiet. Shari'ati explained that his nervousness was a function of the abnormal prevailing conditions.⁵³ In a testament-like statement, as if preparing himself for some great misfortune, Shari'ati told his audience that he did not fear anything nor worried about anything other than the job of transcribing his old speeches, with which he could not keep up.⁵⁴ Two days after this lecture, Minachi was informed by the police that orders had been received to close Ershad. According to Minachi, the regime knew that this would result in confrontation with the students and that such a confrontation would have provided one more excuse for arresting Ershad's officials on charges of instigation. To deny the security forces such a pretext and to avoid any possible confrontation, Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati, Balaghi, Minachi and Ali Shari'ati immediately decided to take a trip to Tonekabon, in the north of Iran.⁵⁵ During their three day trip, the four ate at restaurants and asked for individual receipts in their own names – a means to proving that they were not even in Tehran during the closure. While still on their trip, on the night of Monday 13 November, Homayun and Motahhari were arrested.⁵⁶ Minachi and Shari'ati were sought but could not be found. From the very early hours of the morning of Friday 17 November (26 Aban 1351) Ershad was sealed off by a cordon of police surrounding it. Confronted with the police, the students who had come to attend Ershad's regular programmes immediately realized the significance of the events they were witnessing. The growing number of students, somehow managed to reach Ershad's half-finished mosque where they staged a rather impressive congregational prayer. As the police charged to disperse them after their prayers, the students started chanting provocative slogans while taking flight. Ali-Baba'i recalls that they were preparing themselves for a good beating and at least a few nights in prison.⁵⁷ Certain reports indicated that there were indeed scuffles and a good many were injured and arrested.⁵⁸ Yet until late that winter night students hung around what had become their school, home, sanctuary and an important symbol of political resistance and source of meaning in their lives. Solemnly and quietly some wept, some gazed at Ershad's building and some looked up at Tehran's majestic sky. On the following day, the Shari'atis, Balaghi and Minachi returned to Tehran and each went their own way, knowing that an important chapter in their lives had been turned.

On his return, Minachi found his home surrounded by police. He waited until the next day and went directly to Khodayari, Sabeti's deputy at SAVAK. He was arrested for three days and told that Ershad had been closed because it had become a base for the subversive activities of the Mojahedin. The accusation of conducting activities 'against state security' levelled at Ershad, its directors and major speakers was very grave.⁵⁹ At the time, SAVAK seemed to be concerned with two main issues. First, Sabeti obtained a guarantee from Minachi that neither of the Shari'atis, would ever speak again at Ershad. Minachi recalled that Sabeti told him that Ali Shari'ati had instigated the students and was therefore prohibited to speak publicly.⁶⁰ At SAVAK, he was also informed that Ershad's board of directors must resign so that it could be transferred to the Endowment Organization.

Minachi was told that after their arrest, Motahhari and Homayun had resigned, paving the way for the transfer.⁶¹ The final stage requiring Minachi and Ali-Abadi's signature, never materialized. Minachi's strategem preventing the final transfer of Ershad to the government has its own story. To this day, Ershad continues to maintain its independence. Motahhari was arrested for twenty-four hours and then released. His SAVAK interrogator had asked him about his role at Ershad, reproached him about the activities of Ershad and rebuked him for the situation that had developed there.⁶² The interrogator was, Motahhari recounts, completely ignorant of the fact that he had ruptured his ties with Ershad more than a year earlier and that, upon learning this, apologized and immediately released him.⁶³

When he returned to Tehran, instead of going to his apartment in front of Ershad, Ali Shari'ati chose the home of his cousin, Asghar Mansuri, in Tehran-e Now, a humble southern district of Tehran, as his hide-out. From November 1972 until July 1973, Shari'ati lived in semi-clandestinity. It was not until 17 July 1973 that SAVAK actively and effectively began searching for him. From then until 29 September 1973 Shari'ati became a real fugitive. After Ershad's closure, SAVAK may well have wanted to question him as they did with Motahhari and Minachi. Equally, almost certain that he did not have any organizational affiliations, they may well have believed that he was politically dangerous only as long as he was a public speaker and not as an isolated individual. It could be argued that, as long as Shari'ati could not propagate his ideas through Ershad, SAVAK had no interest in pursuing him.

In a letter to his wife, written more than a month after the closure of Ershad, Shari'ati refers to the interdictions that were imposed on him, but also to the possibility of continuing his work with the Ministry of Higher Education.⁶⁴ In this same letter he even mentions regular visits to relatives on Fridays. In another letter to his wife, Shari'ati referred to the transfer of Ershad to the Endowment Organization and its subsequent operation under the direction and auspices of both the official religious authorities and the security forces. He also pointed to the fact that the security forces had come to the conclusion that Ershad was being 'used' by 'extremist groups basing their revolutionary objectives on religious and Islamic principles.' Wishing to assure his wife that he was out of danger, he added that 'the recent events' were unrelated to 'him, his work and his classes'. According to his optimistic assessment, 'there had been a conspiracy but it was fortunately defused'.⁶⁵ It seems, therefore, that for at least eight months Shari'ati felt semi-reassured that while Ershad was lost, the security forces were not actively seeking him.

Expressing a somewhat different outlook, less than ten days after the closure of Ershad, Shari'ati wrote an important letter addressed to both Homayun and Minachi. In it, he said that he anticipated his imminent arrest.⁶⁶ At a moment of despair, falling back on the will of God and providence, he added that the real founder, manager and responsible of Ershad was 'He' [God] and that before His will, the *fatwa* of the ayatollahs and the command of the shadow of God [the

shah] would be ineffective.⁶⁷ Comparing Ershad to a ball of fire, he wrote that it had now been thrown into a stack of dry wood and, even if the authorities raze it to the ground, 'whenever the people get a chance, they will retake what is theirs in whatever way they can'.⁶⁸ 'Through divine alchemy', he wrote, 'the Ershad which you built some years ago has now become a movement and a school of thought'.⁶⁹ In this letter Shari'ati willed that he should be buried behind the main lecture-hall at Ershad.

A combination of factors must have led to the arrest and imprisonment of Shari'ati. In addition to the Shari'ati-Ershad-Mojahedin connection, SAVAK was increasingly sensitive to the destabilizing political influence of his books. Whenever SAVAK ran into trouble with Islamic armed or unarmed political opposition, Shari'ati's works surfaced as the most influential source of inspiration. The fact that in all parts of the country circles of young Muslim militants were passionately studying Shari'ati, led SAVAK to conclude that he should be incarcerated as soon as possible to avoid further writings. Bahman Naderipur (alias Tehrani), a SAVAK operative, acknowledged at his trial after the revolution that people were arrested for possessing a single book by Shari'ati.⁷⁰ Hadi Ghaffari, who later became highly influential in the Islamic Republic, recalls that in November 1972, when SAVAK officials paid a visit to the small library he had built at a mosque in Ardebil, the first thing they asked was whether his collection included books by 'Aqa-ye Doctor'.⁷¹ Dissatisfied with Ghaffari's denial, all the books which did include Shari'ati's works were loaded onto a truck and hauled to SAVAK headquarters.

The inadvertent wide circulation of a letter by Shari'ati to Ehsan, his son, also played an important role in the decision to arrest him. Although this was a personal letter, Ehsan, a boy of thirteen at the time, had confided in someone who showed interest in the works of his father. Having obtained the letter, this person had xeroxed and sold 'Shari'ati's latest work' for one rial.⁷² Similar to all Shari'ati's writings at the time, the letter was widely distributed. Faced with this letter, written after the closure of Ershad, SAVAK must have assumed Shari'ati was now launching an anti-regime campaign of samizdats and circulars. The letter included a number of assertions, all politically provocative, some of which may have been construed as solid proof of a strong affinity with the Mojahedin.⁷³ Shari'ati observed that his mission in life was 'the awakening and liberation of the people'. The Persian word he used for 'people' was *khalq* and not *mardom* – a term by this time closely associated with the Mojahedin who not only called themselves the Mojahedin-e Khalq but whose freedom fighters opened their official discourse in the name of God and the People (*khalq*). Shari'ati wrote that one who wanted to sacrifice himself (*fada*) for God and the *khalq*, whom he said were one and the same, would among other things have to accept 'his own bondage for the sake of the people's (*mardom*) freedom' and 'welcome his own pain for the welfare of the people (*khalq*)'.⁷⁴ Shari'ati was intentionally referring both to the Mojahedin and the Fada'ian as the true servants of God and the people. He asserted that serving God without serving the people was the game that *akhonds*, a derogatory term for

the clergy, played.⁷⁵ Referring to his messianic mission and that of his followers, he wrote, 'we want to awaken these spellbound, dormant people and force them to stand up'.⁷⁶ He pointed out that his words generated action and created a movement, awakened and exposed. Shari'ati explained his responsibility as that of 'firing bullets of truth at the enemy's black army, tearing off and setting fire to the black veil of ignorance and communicating the message to the people (*khalq*)'.⁷⁷ Drawing a parallel between his activities and those of the Prophet, Shari'ati referred to the regime and even the person of the shah in symbolic terms too close to reality. In an inter-temporal analogy he pointed out that 'bullies, nobles, rulers, sultans, slaveowners, clerics, idol-worshippers and the military brass of Iran and Rome had prevented the people from hearing the message of the Prophet, obliging him to fight them with his sword'.⁷⁸ Shari'ati's tone must have alarmed SAVAK. In his letter Shari'ati's used 'we', a term that SAVAK could have associated with some type of organization. Furthermore his melange of intellectual and armed means of struggle against the regime was becoming too obscure. The image of the 'bullets of truth' fired at the 'enemy's army' was all too expressive of what the Iranian guerillas were engaged in. SAVAK must have felt that Shari'ati had crossed the Rubicon and had to be arrested before more of his provocative letters were circulated among his admirers.

After Shari'ati's arrest, an old classmate of his, who had later joined the Eighth Bureau of SAVAK (concerned with anti-espionage) tried to find out why Shari'ati was arrested and what he could do for him. He was told by General Vadi'i, the deputy-head of the Third Bureau that Ershad was closed primarily because of a petition signed by twenty clerical figures. The petition is said to have accused Shari'ati of being a Wahhabi and an eclectic, arguing that Iran was a Shi'i country, the clergy had pleaded with the authorities to silence him. According to Vadi'i, Ershad was closed to calm the anti-Shari'ati clergy. As for Shari'ati's arrest, his old friend recalls that his letter to his son had triggered the decision.⁷⁹ The published report of a SAVAK interrogator, written on a paper without the regular SAVAK letterhead, undated and unsigned, proves that the letter did in indeed play a crucial role. Written after the arrest of Ali and Mohammad-Taqi, it argues that since Mohammad-Taqi had absolutely nothing to do with the 'composition' of Shari'ati's letter to his son and had never been involved in any subversive activities, he should be released but that Ali should remain in prison.⁸⁰

On the afternoon of 17 July 1973, intent on capturing Shari'ati, SAVAK entered his home in Mashhad. The family was in the process of moving to Tehran and most of the contents of their home were packed and ready for transportation. According to Ehsan, six men entered their house and started searching the rooms and the contents of the packed cartons. They selected all the books that were printed in Moscow or were considered 'subversive' at the time. Among them were works of Chekhov, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and Shari'ati's own books. Before leaving, they told the family that they were searching for Ali Shari'ati and recommended that he should surrender himself to the authorities as soon as possible.⁸¹ Concurrently,

another group descended upon Mohammad-Taqi's home in Mashhad and arrested him. In Tehran, at 10 pm on the same day, SAVAK arrested Reza Shari'at-Razavi, Ali's brother-in-law, at his home.⁸² Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati and Reza Shari'at-Razavi, who were placed in the same prison cell, were first taken to the notorious Komiteh prison in Tehran for interrogation. Manuchehri, who questioned them, was interested only in Ali Shari'ati's whereabouts.⁸³ As both men denied having any information, after a few days they were sent to Evin prison. Reza Shari'at-Razavi was released after a month, but Mohammad-Taqi was kept, despite his ailing health.

Ali Shari'ati's real ordeal began with his father's arrest and imprisonment. After the release of his brother-in-law, it was clear that Mohammad-Taqi was being kept as a hostage. Shari'ati was caught between giving himself up to the authorities and securing his father's release or avoiding arrest at all costs while accepting the repercussions in terms of his father's ill health at prison. Uncertain of his father's release if he did surrender, and anxious about what awaited him in prison, Shari'ati pondered his dilemma for about two and a half months. During the seventy days between his father's arrest and the day he walked into SAVAK's headquarters at the Komiteh prison to keep his 'appointment' with Attarpur, he moved frequently from hideout to hideout, listening to different opinions and mulling over different courses of action. His closest companion during this period was probably his cousin Asghar Mansuri and Amirpur, while his trusted counsel was Minachi, who kept in touch wherever he went. By mid-September, there were, it seems, two different positions on the reason for Mohammad-Taqi's arrest and Ali's subsequent course of action. Having probed the Shari'ati's situation, Minachi had come to the conclusion that Mohammad-Taqi was taken as a hostage and would remain imprisoned until Shari'ati was arrested.⁸⁴ Akbar Safavieh, Shari'ati's old friend and school-mate in whose home Shari'ati lived for a week just before he surrendered, believed that Mohammad-Taqi's case was not directly related to Ali's and therefore counselled against his surrender.⁸⁵ Very close friends and relatives had differing opinions on what Shari'ati should do. Some suggested that he should flee the country and argued that once SAVAK realized he had escaped it would release Mohammad-Taqi who would be of no use to them anymore.⁸⁶ Minachi recalls that during those days, he met Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani in front of Refah high school. Rafsanjani is said to have recommended that Shari'ati should surrender himself and accept the consequences.⁸⁷ By the end of September, Shari'ati finally decided to surrender himself to secure the release of his father.

Shari'ati, however, sought a firm guarantee from a powerful authority within the Iranian political hierarchy, to assure him that his father would in fact be released upon his own surrender. Subsequently, a meeting was arranged between Shari'ati and Manuchehr Azmun, the powerful deputy prime minister and director of the Endowment Organization, who was also closely affiliated with SAVAK. Minachi accompanied Shari'ati to Azmun's office from where Azmun called Sabeti

who is said to have promised that as soon as Ali's brief 'conversation' with SAVAK was over his father would be released.⁸⁸ At this meeting it was decided that Shari'ati would go to Sabeti at SAVAK headquarters on the next day. Implying that the whole affair would only take a few days, Azmun presented Shari'ati with the publications of the Endowment Organization, asked him to read them and showed interest in Shari'ati's feedback once the whole affair was settled. Azmun is said to have added, 'please come back and see us in a few days so that we can discuss the publications'.⁸⁹ According to Minachi, as Shari'ati and he left Azmun's office, they sensed the gravity of the situation and knew that Shari'ati's surrender would be followed by an indeterminate period of imprisonment.

Having braced himself for prison, Shari'ati was preoccupied with the manner in which he should confront his inquisitors. He knew that they would want to humiliate and break him, yet he also knew that he was not an ordinary prisoner from whom, under torture, they would want to squeeze information about his clandestine activities or organizational ties. Shari'ati prepared himself for probably the most important mental exercise of his life. He was intent on twisting and turning his interrogators with his words until they would wash their hands of him.⁹⁰ If he could drag their questions and queries into the theoretical and intellectual realm and philosophize, he could evade everything and emerge triumphant and unscathed. One of Minachi's last recommendations to Shari'ati before he surrendered was that he should refrain from his customary assertion of the need to change society.

Imprisonment

On 28 September 1973, Shari'ati went to SAVAK headquarters where he met with Sabeti. He was instructed to present himself on the following day at ten in the morning to Reza Attarpur (alias Dr Hosseinzadeh), Sabeti's deputy and a key operator and interrogator. Shari'ati returned to his newly acquired home in Tehran and spent the night with his family, who had just moved from Mashhad. The next day he packed a small bag, went to the Komiteh prison located inside the General Headquarters of the Police, and presented himself to Attarpur. On his arrival the interrogation began. Detainees at the Komiteh were usually first interrogated orally and then ordered to write a full history of their political activities, organizational ties and contacts. At first, Shari'ati briefly explained his activities after the closure of Ershad and informed his interrogator that, at Sabeti's request, he had come to Komiteh to provide 'certain explanations' (*pareh'i-ye towzihat*). His interrogator's first statement, which was also the standard line addressed to all newcomers to the Komiteh prison, shed light on what awaited Shari'ati. He was told that the authorities were certain of his identity and that he had been arrested for 'subversive activities and plotting against state security.' He was subsequently asked, 'what do you have to say in relation to this charge?', to which Shari'ati responded, 'I have nothing to say.'¹ A new chapter had begun in his life. It lasted eighteen months.

Based on the seriously tampered pages of Shari'ati's published interrogations at SAVAK, it can be surmised that he was questioned four times at least. The fourth interrogation was conducted on 29 September, a month and twenty days after the first.² The written statement of his third and fourth interrogations is at least fourteen pages long. Even though the purpose of publishing parts of Shari'ati's disjointed interrogations was to incriminate him, in his responses Shari'ati does not appear apologetic about his activities. It was relatively common for SAVAK to forcefully obtain a promise of collaboration from political prisoners before their release; but for Shari'ati no such document has been published. Unless it is assumed that the document was removed from his file, the absence of such a sensitive paper implies that he never signed one.

The meagre evidence available indicates that Shari'ati's responses were largely based on aggrandizing his anti-clerical position, capitalizing on it and placing it

in the limelight. By presenting anti-clericalism as the main focus of his activities, he sought to minimize his role as an agitator. The anti-clerical campaign, an undeniable aspect of his activities, was used as a smoke-screen to avoid commenting on his politico-religious discourse. While Shari'ati had used religion as a tool for political destabilization, in his interrogations he sought to prove that the object of his politics was to challenge the monopoly of the clergy. He tried to demonstrate that, because of his discourse and activities at Ershad, the clergy believed that he was being incited by the regime (*dastgah*) to attack them.³ In response to the allegation that his activities at Ershad were subversive, he asserted that it was common knowledge that Ershad had been established with the consent and supervision of the government. He added that he was certain that the security services were 'regularly and directly' informed about his activities at Ershad and that his lectures were approved by the 'authorities'.⁴ His tactical line of defence was primarily based on the claim that SAVAK was not only knowledgeable, but was also believed to have supported his activities at Ershad. Minachi maintains that he had recommended this line of defence to Shari'ati before he surrendered.⁵

As for the content of his lectures and their influence on his audience, in his interrogations Shari'ati maintained that being neither opiate-like nor provocative, his lectures were aimed at enlightening the Muslim masses.⁶ Asked the key questions of whether, over the entire period during which he lectured and taught at Ershad, he had spoken on the topics of 'loving the shah' (*shah-dusti*) and 'adoration for the motherland' (*vatan-parasti*) or referred to 'the country's progress and developments' or explained why 'one should not engage in activities against the interests of the state,' his response was clearly evasive. He argued that at Ershad he was trying to prove his objectivity and impartiality to his students. This, he maintained, was the prerequisite for 'combatting extremist and deviationist thoughts'. He concluded that gaining the trust of students was a greater service to the interests of the state than the work of 'the official propagandists concerned with the immediate interests of the state.'⁷ Asked if he believed that his Islamic ideas were compatible with the interests of the state, Shari'ati's response was shrewd. Referring to the shah's White Revolution as Iran's revolution, he asserted that it was anti-feudal and anti-reactionary. He added that, according to the highest authority in the state (*shakhs-e avval-e mamlekat*), Iran's revolution was also based on Islam. Shari'ati in this way implicitly suggested that his anti-feudal, anti-reactionary and Islamic ideas were compatible with the interests of the state as defined by the shah himself.⁸ Shari'ati, however, agreed with his interrogator who suggested that his lectures at Ershad were perhaps too hasty. Referring to the closure of Ershad, he conceded that 'a group of deviationist elements tried to exploit the situation.'⁹ To avoid the recurrence of such a condition, Shari'ati suggested that he would be ready to continue his work at Ershad under the direct supervision of the security forces.¹⁰ His repetition of the same account in different interrogations demonstrates that he was forced to rewrite his political experience over and over again to enable his interrogators to detect any discrepancies in his statements.

The Komiteh Prison

The notorious Komiteh prison, the mere name of which evoked fear and terror, was the temporary chamber of horror of newly arrested political prisoners. As long as SAVAK interrogators were not convinced that they had wrested the last drop of information from their political detainees, they kept them at the Komiteh. Here intensive, violent and sustained methods of interrogation primarily based on physical torture were used in order to break-in suspects and extract confessions and sensitive information. In the meantime, on the basis of interrogations, SAVAK built a 'sound' case against the political prisoners before they were put on trial and sentenced. After their trial, if not sentenced to death, prisoners were usually sent to Qasr prison to serve their time. Shari'ati's 'residence' at Komiteh was probably one of the longest for any political detainee. Keeping a political prisoner at Komiteh for eighteen months was unusual, since the interrogators generally obtained the information they sought in a much shorter period.

As Shari'ati was never put on trial, he did not have a legal term to serve. Theoretically it could be argued that Shari'ati served eighteen months without any 'legal' charges, since an indictment by the state prosecutor against him does not exist. Based on SAVAK's response to an inquiry by the Ministry of Higher Education on whether that Ministry should continue to pay Shari'ati's university salary, it could be argued that until May 1974 key figures such as Attarpur and Sabeti thought that an indictment would be forthcoming and therefore believed that Shari'ati would be put on trial. SAVAK allowed the Ministry of Education to pay his salary while he was in jail, yet emphasized that such payment should continue 'until an indictment was issued'.¹¹ Why the regime decided against putting Shari'ati on trial is only a matter of speculation. Shari'ati was not implicated in any armed clandestine activities against the state, nor was he linked to any guerilla organizations. Yet many lesser-known people were put on trial and sentenced to prison for offences less serious than Shari'ati's. Ironically, an incriminating charge against some of those sentenced was the act of possessing or reading his books. Worried about the negative domestic and foreign propaganda that Shari'ati's trial could stir, the regime probably felt that it would be to its advantage not to invite such criticism.

The living conditions at the Komiteh prison sowed the first seeds of fearful anticipation in the hearts of the detainees. The ward, cut off from other wards by a heavy steel door, was composed of a long corridor with eleven prison cells on each side. The white-coloured cells had no electricity within and were only furnished with a thin dark red or blue carpet. Through a fine metal net, each cell received some light from a bulb located in the corridor. The doors of the cells were always kept closed and the wardens communicated with the prisoners through a small slot that opened and closed from the outside only. The prisoners were allowed to use the bathroom only four times a day. Each time they had to be escorted by a warden. Prisoners were usually issued Zar, Homa and later Winston cigarettes, but whenever they needed a light, they had to ask the wardens. Their only

'belongings' were one or two blankets, a pair of black plastic slippers and sometimes a plastic drinking vessel. Their clothes were taken away on arrival and they were issued standard grey-coloured prison clothing. Before and while they were interrogated they were usually not allowed visits by members of their family, yet no common rule applied in this case.

On his arrival, Shari'ati was put in solitary confinement in ward number three, and then transferred to cell six in ward number six. For eighteen months he was incarcerated in a two and a half meter by one and a half meter cell. After a month, he was allowed regular weekly visits by members of his family.¹² At first, during these visits, which lasted some ten minutes, a prison warden and a SAVAK interrogator were present.¹³ Clearly, Shari'ati was no ordinary political prisoner. He was an academic and a well-known public figure with a considerable following among the young. In his case, SAVAK was not confronted with the standard political activist it was used to. Shari'ati was not suspected of having sensitive information or leads that could unveil an armed attack, a political kidnapping or a revolutionary execution of some financial magnate, top military brass or political dignitary. He had already divulged his secrets in his speeches and his writings. He was not involved in a clandestine study group examining the ideological or revolutionary works of Latin American, Chinese or Palestinian ideologues, guerillas or military tacticians. He was the home-made ideologue, speaker and author of radical Islamic ideas, pronounced publicly and available to all, which SAVAK found 'subversive' and destabilizing. Whatever information SAVAK wanted on these ideas it could obtain by studying Shari'ati's widely published works or listening to his recorded speeches. The problem, however, was that he had written or said so much that it would have taken SAVAK a very long time to read or listen to it all. This is why the formation of a 'special committee' to study and analyse Shari'ati's works seems most probable. The fact that he was a special case meant that the means and methods used by SAVAK to exert pressure on him to obtain whatever they sought would also be different.

According to some of his fellow inmates, Shari'ati's living conditions, compared to other prisoners, were rather privileged. Instead of prison clothes, his family was allowed to bring him grey clothes from home as long as they were not very different in style from the prison issue. They were also allowed to bring him cigarettes from home,¹⁴ so he smoked Zarin cigarettes rather than Zar or Homa. Whereas regular prisoners received a given cigarette ration per day, Shari'ati could smoke unlimited numbers and was allowed to possess his own matches. Mirzazadeh, who was imprisoned in Shari'ati's ward between the Spring and Fall of 1974, remembers that on their visits, Shari'ati's family used to bring him fruit. One day, to his surprise, the prison warden informed Mirzazadeh that it was time for him to go to the bathroom. There he discovered that Shari'ati had left him some fruit and had asked the warden to pass them on. On more than one occasion, through Shari'ati, Mirzazadeh received cherries, a slice of watermelon and an orange.¹⁵ Ahmad-Reza Karimi, an enigmatic figure who after the revolution

was accused of and tried for close collaboration with SAVAK, was placed in Shari'ati's cell for three months to spy on him. At the seventh session of his trial, confirming Dr Asadi Lari's statement, Karimi maintained that while he was Shari'ati's cell-mate and even afterwards, Shari'ati's meals were delivered from outside the prison and that in his cell he had a radio as well as newspapers.¹⁶ According to some of his fellow inmates, Shari'ati's privileges included the possession of utensils such as a fork and an electric shaver, and that the door of his cell was frequently left open. An inmate remembered distinctly that on his way to the bathroom, to his surprise, he saw Shari'ati and the inside of his cell through the open door. In his memoirs, Hadi Ghaffari also recalled having seen Shari'ati through the open door of his cell.¹⁷ Shari'ati's ultimate special right, according to more than one of his fellow prisoners, is said to have been the possession of books, writing paper and an unspecified writing utensil. While according to Puran Shari'at-Razavi, Shari'ati was not permitted to possess any books, some of his fellow inmates maintain that Shari'ati did possess them. Mirzazadeh recalled having seen Shari'ati with his books.¹⁸ He even distinctly remembered having borrowed a book of Hafez from Shari'ati.¹⁹ Another prisoner in the same ward recalls seeing Shari'ati sitting on the floor with a pile of books at his side. He remembers the dark brown color of the book on top of the pile and a stack of A4 white paper and a writing utensil in his hand.²⁰ Mirzazadeh also remembers Shari'ati having access to paper and a writing utensil at Komiteh.²¹ Ehsan Shari'ati, however, maintains that his father had no access to paper and pen.²²

Other than the psychological pressure, hardship and humiliation to which every prisoner at Komiteh was subjected, there is no indication that Shari'ati was ever physically tortured. He was, however, confronted with his old students at Ershad, who were badly tortured. It is even said that some were tortured in his presence.²³ On one occasion the interrogators ordered one of the tortured students to spit on him, claiming that Shari'ati had been responsible for the state that he was in. Shari'ati recalled that he was so moved and saddened when the young man refused to spit on him that he could explode.²⁴ A few months before his release, Shari'ati was informed that he should give an interview to a group of foreign journalists investigating charges of torture in Iranian prisons. Iranian students abroad and their publications had widely publicized Shari'ati's imprisonment, maintaining that he was under regular pressure to appear on television and publicly recant.²⁵ The regime must have wanted to prove that Shari'ati, for one, had not been tortured. Anxious and apprehensive about the idea of an interview which, irrespective of its content would have caused problems for him, Shari'ati finally succeeded in convincing Sabeti that such a move was not to anyone's advantage or interest.²⁶

Faced with the regular pressure that was put on him, Shari'ati tried to keep up his morale. At the Komiteh, he is said to have quipped, he was regularly tortured adding, 'my torture is to engage in scientific discussions and debates with General Zandipur, whenever he enters my cell.'²⁷ General Zandipur was in charge of Komiteh prison and was assassinated by the Peoples' Mojahedin in 1975. He was, it is

reported, a soft spoken person who tried to convey a friendly and naive image to the prisoners. Shari'ati had many souvenirs from his discussions with Zandipur. At their first encounter, Zandipur inquired whether Shari'ati had also been implicated in a murder case, to which Shari'ati had responded, 'yes, that of Abel!'. Unaware of the fact that the comment was in jest, Zandipur is said to have questioned his colleagues on Abel's case and had subsequently become their laughing-stock.²⁸

With the prison guards, who were usually simple provincial types, Shari'ati developed a close relationship. Although the guards were strictly instructed not to talk to prisoners, Shari'ati gradually lured them into a conversation from which developed friendship and some degree of trust. His charm is said to have even enchanted at least one of his interrogators. Attarpur had deliberately chosen and assigned Kamali, reputed to be a cold-blooded interrogator, to Shari'ati's case. After a year, Kamali interceded on Shari'ati's behalf arguing that he was absolutely innocent and that he simply wished to have his name engraved in history. Furious to find that Kamali had fallen under Shari'ati's spell, Attarpur lost his temper and insulted him, retorting, 'what the hell do you illiterate creatures know about history?'²⁹

In August 1974, or some eleven months after Ali Shari'ati surrendered himself, SAVAK finally decided to release the ailing and aged Mohammad-Taqi. A rumour of his father's death at the Qasr prison had circulated in the Komiteh causing Ali considerable anguish. In what seemed an act of appeasement, the prison authorities arranged for Ali Shari'ati to meet his father before his final release. Delighted at the sight of his father, Ali threw himself on his hands, to kiss them. Unable to recognize his son, Mohammad-Taqi asked the young man to stand up, and until Ali introduced himself Mohammad-Taqi still did not recognize him. After a brief chat in the presence of the prison authorities, Mohammad-Taqi was led out.³⁰ Ali was left behind the bars for another seven months.

A New Day

On the eve of the last Wednesday of every year, Iranians welcome the new year by celebrating Chaharshanbeh Suri, 'the festivities of Wednesday'. Just before the night falls, young and old leap over small bonfires whispering or chanting to the blazing flames the traditional verses: 'let my paleness (yellowness) be yours and your rudeness (redness) be mine.' The last day of the Iranian year 1353 was a Wednesday and therefore concurrent with Chaharshanbeh Suri. For the Shari'ati family, however, it was just another visiting day at Komiteh prison. When the normal wait took much longer, the family protested only to be informed that Shari'ati would be released that same night. At around nine o'clock in the evening the family was told to return home and wait for him. Around midnight, Ali Shari'ati was driven from Komiteh prison to his home and released.³¹ The new year or Nowruz of 1354

(21 March 1975) marked the end of a taxing ordeal for both Ali Shari'ati and his family. On New Year's day, as may be expected, their home became the scene of real festivities.

Iran's political and religious environment since Shari'ati's imprisonment had undergone some changes. While the economic boom had positively affected the livelihood of urban dwellers, the political atmosphere had become more tense. Despite heavy losses, the armed guerilla movement had intensified its activities with both sides taking a heavy toll. The result was a more politicized urban population. The activities of the urban guerillas had spread to numerous major Iranian cities. Their targets included members of the royal family, foreign military advisers and diplomats, Iranian military and security figures of all ranks, and industrial magnates. Iranian newspapers regularly reported street battles, armed robberies, attempted kidnappings, political assassinations, explosions, fires at factories, cinemas, and government buildings and the capture, trial, sentencing and finally execution of so-called 'saboteurs'. The shah was becoming evermore intolerant of growing dissent. Alarmed at the unrest in the universities, in November 1973 he ordered the chancellors of all universities to take 'extremely severe measures against university students'.³² After his victories on the international front, he became arrogant enough to dissolve the multi-party system, which only existed in name. Launching a single party, the shah labelled those who refused to join his party as either communists or traitors and threatened that they should either leave the country or be imprisoned.

Certain changes and realignments had also occurred within the religious community. The activities of the Mojahedin had led some relatively influential and radical clerical figures to support them both morally and financially. Four days after Shari'ati's imprisonment, an important circular was issued by Sheikh Hossein-Ali Montazeri from his exile in Tabas.³³ Montazeri, who by this time was reputed to be a militant anti-establishment cleric and a staunch supporter of Khomeini, took a firm stand in favour of Shari'ati. He chided the influential ayatollahs for rallying against Shari'ati and engaging in divisive rumours and attacked the *velayatis*. Referring directly to those who wrongfully accused others of being 'Sunnis and Wahhabis in the name of defending the rulership of the imams (*velayat*) and Shi'ism,' he called them liars and implicitly labelled them as pawns of 'colonial powers'. Montazeri pleaded for 'scientific debate' when theoretical disagreements surfaced and warned against 'infantile feuds, factionalism and invectives'. While Shari'ati was in prison, Montazeri publicly rallied to his cause. The two men had one thing in common. In the affair of the book *Shahid-e Javid* (The Eternal Martyr), Montazeri had also come under considerable attack by the conservative *velayatis*. Two months after the appearance of Montazeri's circular in support of Shari'ati, a declaration was issued by the 'Association of Iran's Progressive Clergy' (*Jame'eh-e Rowhaniyat-e Motaraqqi-ye Iran*) protesting Shari'ati's arrest.³⁴ This was the first time a group of clerics wrote in support of Shari'ati. Two days before his release from prison, the 'Clergy of Qom's Seminary School' issued another

friendly declaration in which Shari'ati was referred to as the 'spokesperson of Islam'.³⁵ Clearly while Shari'ati was in prison important cracks had appeared in the clergy's solid united front against him. The events that followed the clergy's boycott of Ershad and attacks on Shari'ati, left the anti-establishment and politically conscious members of the clergy with feelings of guilt and regret. The end result demonstrated that those members of the clergy who had turned their back on Ershad and Shari'ati had weakened the burgeoning Islamic opposition to the shah. Minachi recalled that after the closure of Ershad and before Shari'ati's imprisonment, Abolfazl Zanjani, Motahhari, Beheshti, Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Homayun and he were invited at Ali Tahririan's (Rofugaran) home. Discussing the situation after Ershad's closure, Motahhari had said; 'All things considered, Ershad has successfully fulfilled its mission, our continued presence might have increased its positive impact only by some 10 per cent.'³⁶ To some of those present, Motahhari's statement was an apology for the wrong committed against Shari'ati and Ershad.

Freedom and Confusion

Shari'ati's unexpected release from prison caused some speculation on the regime's motives. Two radically different explanations emerged. The first, apparently put forward by Shari'ati himself, was that his release was due to international pressure on the Iranian regime. According to Minachi, Shari'ati recounted that Hosseinzadeh had informed him that the shah had ordered his release after returning from a visit to Algiers to attend the summit meeting of the leaders of OPEC countries.³⁷ Shari'ati's old friends in the Algerian National Liberation Front, who had attained high positions in the government, had used their influence with the Iranian government at the time when Algeria was mediating between Iran and Iraq, to secure his freedom.³⁸ The shah travelled to Algeria on 5 March 1975 where Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika, the influential Algerian minister of foreign affairs, is said to have requested Shari'ati's freedom on behalf of President Boumedienne. The shah is said to have obliged the request since the Algerians had played a key role in the reconciliation between Iran and Iraq.³⁹ Various sources sympathetic to Shari'ati have repeated this account.⁴⁰ Chronologically the account may be correct, since the shah returned to Iran on 8 March and Shari'ati was released on 20 March 1975.

The second, and most recent explanation of the regime's motive is put forward by Rowhani, whose view is acutely biased against Shari'ati. His scenario, however, is worth noting because his account is claimed to be based on SAVAK documents not open to the public. Notwithstanding the possibility of forgery, mutilated parts of two documents presented as authentic tell another story of Shari'ati's release from the Komiteh. The first document is composed of only the third page of a type-written report presumably on Shari'ati by a SAVAK agent. The report claims that Shari'ati's writings and speeches were used by Marxist elements [Mojahedin] to articulate the philosophical basis of their newly founded ideology. According to

this report, after his imprisonment, Ali Shari'ati had gradually realized that his writings had been misused and misinterpreted and after considerable discussion, had finally written a book entitled 'Mankind, Islam and Western Doctrines', in which Marxism and Islamic Marxism were severely criticized. The author opines that in this book, Shari'ati convincingly and categorically rejects any and all similarities between Marxism and Islam and proves their complete contradiction. According to this report 2000 xeroxed copies of the book were prepared for distribution at an opportune moment. The report added that Ali Shari'ati was in the process of writing a second book in prison and recommends, in conclusion, the release of Mohammad-Taqi and the continued imprisonment of Ali. At the bottom of the page, a handwritten statement notes that the shah has been informed, has agreed to the publication of the book as soon as possible and has recommended its publication first as a series of articles in the newspapers.⁴¹ Contrary to all other handwritten statements or comments at the end of SAVAK reports, this statement possesses neither an identifiable signature nor a date.

A second document composed only of the middle page or pages of a report presumably written on Shari'ati by a SAVAK agent, is type-written again on a paper without any of SAVAK's usual insignia. It repeats the same propositions as in the first document. Alluding to Shari'ati's realization, after his arrest and interrogation, that his writings have had an adverse effect, the report contends that Shari'ati has written two books. According to this document, the first – *Ensan, eslam va falsafeha-ye maghreb-zamin* (Mankind, Islam and Western philosophies) – refuted the propositions of the Islamic Marxists, a label used by the regime for the Mojahedin. The second, *Bazgasht be khishtan* (Return to oneself), was written to prove and promote the grandeur and importance of the Iranian people. At the end of the document, it is opined that since Ali Shari'ati is prepared and willing to make up for his past by writing 'nationalistic and patriotic works', he should be released from prison and allowed to write these at home.⁴²

On the basis of these two documents, Rowhani concludes that the price of Shari'ati's freedom was the two 'nationalistic and patriotic' (*asar-e melli va mihani*) books that he wrote in prison.⁴³ This account is also corroborated by the testimony of Iraj Faridi, head of SAVAK's First Bureau, at his own trial after the revolution.⁴⁴ According to Faridi, Shari'ati wrote 'Mankind, Islam and Western doctrines' and 'Return to oneself' under Attarpur's pressure and also because he was promised his release. In her response to Faridi's assertions, published in the daily *Kayhan*, Puran Shari'at Razavi argued that they were 'contemptible accusations' and the two works were not written in prison.⁴⁵ Faridi's account is also confirmed by an anonymous member of SAVAK interviewed by Matini.⁴⁶ The anonymous member of SAVAK who, on the basis of his account of a telephone call with Shari'ati before his imprisonment, is probably Sabeti, maintains that the two works, which were later published in *Kayhan*, were not a reproduction of Shari'ati's old works. Both were written inside the prison and after his release, not before his imprisonment. The 'anonymous source' maintains that the articles were

given to SAVAK in a handwritten form and SAVAK typed them and subsequently gave them to *Kayhan* for publication.

Even though Shari'ati's authorship of these two works has never been contested, the time and place at which it was written has become the subject of considerable controversy. In politically-repressed societies, heroes and national symbols of resistance are considered immaculate and infallible. They are Achilles with no heels. Shari'ati's enemies want to shatter the image of 'the teacher of righteousness' by proving that he yielded to the pressure of his gaolers by writing in prison and that the act of writing is testimony to his collaboration with the regime. Hurt and offended by the insinuation that in prison Shari'ati might have done anything other than what they consider to be heroic resistance, and accepting the assumption of his enemies that writing in prison was an act of 'collaboration', his admirers categorically refute this contention.

The truth cannot be established until all SAVAK files are opened and even then may not be easily settled since it is now evident that the contents of these files have found their way into private hands. The publication of SAVAK documents relating to political figures whose memoirs have been published since the revolution proves that SAVAK files are no longer intact. In the absence of definitive proof on the basis of primary documents, it may be easier to treat the thorny issue of where and when these two controversial articles were written indirectly. First, an examination of their content, style and method of analysis can clarify their main objectives. Second, by placing them in the context of the broad contour of Shari'ati's works on similar topics it is possible to demonstrate the continuity or discontinuity in his thought. Third, the key issues elaborated in *Mankind* and *Return* can be contrasted with the treatment of those same issues in his other works. Finally, it would be useful to examine whether the two writings could be considered as appeasing and conciliatory works towards the regime, thus constituting a worthwhile means of exchange for Shari'ati's release from prison.

Revisionism: by Choice or Force?

The ideas presented in the two texts *Mankind* and *Return*, as well as their follow-up, *Return to Which Oneself?*, represent important departures from notions, views and positions expressed in Shari'ati's insurrectionary discourse. The divergence of ideas is such that it would be appropriate to consider these writings as revisionist. Each work is centered around one major axis of debate. Each revision relates to a topic on which Shari'ati took a relatively clear position in his lectures. The common denominator of all three is their emphasis on the existence of an ever present foreign enemy and the need for social cohesion, national solidarity, class cooperation and subsequently a call for political and intellectual tolerance. Gone are the fiery invitations to struggle and combat characteristic of Shari'ati's insurrectionary lectures. In these writings, the foreign enemy does not pose an economic

or political threat, instead Shari'ati identifies the main danger as 'cultural imperialism'.⁴⁷ The issues elaborated in all three works are of great importance given the prevalent political conditions in Iran.

On 14 February 1976, eleven months after his release, the first part of Shari'ati's 'Mankind, Islam and Western doctrines' was published as a serial in the daily *Kayhan*. The blurb on the first page of *Kayhan* acknowledged that Shari'ati's 'political and philosophical articles' were on 'Mankind, Islam and Western doctrines'.⁴⁸ However, without any further explanation, it added that the work was being published under the title of 'Marxism against Islam'. The new name chosen for Shari'ati's writing was clearly intended to carry a message. Just four months before its publication, the Mojahedin had produced a manifesto, sending tremors through the entire Iranian opposition, especially its revolutionary wing. Announcing and explaining the ideological shift of their organization from Islam to Marxism, the Marxist Mojahedin made a scathing attack on Islam and referred directly to Ali Shari'ati, undermining his role and the significance of his works. They contended that Islamic revivalists, from Asadabadi to Shari'ati had been incapable of explaining modern socio-economic and political events and problems. Condemning religion as an inert and barren idea, they contended that any formulation or ideology based on religion would become immediately outmoded and archaic.⁴⁹ The manifesto also referred to the fact that the original, or Islamic, Mojahedin studied and made considerable use of revolutionary Marxism.⁵⁰

The name given to Shari'ati's articles was intended to discredit not only the Marxist, but also what remained of the Islamic Mojahedin, whom the regime had already dubbed 'Islamic Marxists'. Given the intensification of armed struggle by the Iranian guerilla movement during this period, the regime seemed intent on driving a wedge between the Muslim popular masses and the predominantly Marxist revolutionary vanguard. It wanted to demonstrate that, according to no less than Shari'ati, Marxism was incompatible with both Islam and Iranian nationalism. Even though Shari'ati had consistently taken issue with Marxism he had also referred to socially conscious atheists as being closer to the spirit of the religion than socially aloof and hidebound Muslims.⁵¹ Contrary to the traditional clergy, the criteria of Islamicness for Shari'ati was not the degree of an individual's piety but the degree of one's socio-economic engagement and praxis. On the basis of Shari'ati's speeches and classes at Ershad, it could be readily argued that, for him, political alignments were not at all based on rigid lines of religiosity and irreligiosity, but on socio-political action or passivity. Intent on keeping a united anti-despotic front of all political forces, including the Marxist guerilla organizations, Shari'ati acted as a bridge-builder. He had often repeated that the main struggle was not between Muslims and unbelievers but between Muslims and despotic oppressors.⁵²

In 'Mankind, Islam and Western Doctrines', some of Shari'ati's basic arguments and ideas do not differ much from those presented in his Mashhad classes on *Eslamshenasi*. Certain passages are even quasi-verbatim reproductions of *Eslamshenasi*.⁵³ Shari'ati continued to attack 'Western liberalism, and 'Eastern

communism' for their inability to provide conducive conditions for the 'free development of human nature'. Their common shortcoming, he believed, was rooted in their perception of human nature as materialistic and non-spiritual.⁵⁴ The real change in paradigm appears in Shari'ati's arguments and conclusions on the compatibility of Islam with Marxism. While in *Eslamshenasi*, he claimed that he was neither a Marxist nor an anti-Marxist, his position in 'Mankind' can be considered that of an anti-Marxist Muslim.⁵⁵ Unconcerned with seeking common socio-political and economic ground with the Marxists, as he had done in some of his key speeches, in 'Mankind', Shari'ati emphasises irreconcilable philosophical and doctrinaire differences between Islam and Marxism. In several passages he argues that Islam and Marxism are contradictory ideologies and the proof or survival of one was contingent upon the rejection or annihilation of the other.⁵⁶ Shari'ati thus presents his readers with a clear-cut trade-off between Islam and Marxism.⁵⁷ In 'Mankind', he attempted to prove not only that Marxism and Islam were contradictory ideologies in every conceivable respect, but that the two world outlooks were on an inevitable collision course in their entirety.⁵⁸ Shari'ati concludes that such a confrontation would have to result in the annihilation of one ideology and the supremacy of the other.⁵⁹

A textual comparison between *Eslamshenasi* and 'Mankind' leads to interesting observations on certain volte-face changes in Shari'ati's positions and arguments. In 'Mankind', Shari'ati argues that since Marxism is fundamentally based on a 'unique and absolute truth' called dialectical materialism, its primary mission is the systematic uprooting of religion.⁶⁰ The battle that Marxism wages against religion, Shari'ati maintained, is more relentless than that of any other materialist doctrine.⁶¹ This concept of hostile, vindictive and antagonistic contradiction between religion and Marxism, leading to the inevitable destruction of one by the other is particular to this writing and cannot be found in any of Shari'ati's other works. In *Eslamshenasi*, Shari'ati assailed Soviet Marxism which he called 'official' or 'state Marxism', accusing it of abandoning class warfare, promoting peaceful coexistence and fostering a party composed of the new nobility.⁶² He even labelled the position of the French Communist party vis à vis the events in Algeria and Hungary as 'reactionary and inhuman'.⁶³ Yet Shari'ati clearly distinguished between actually existing socialism and Marx's socialism. He also went out of his way to demonstrate that Marx's ideology was compatible with revolutionary Islam declaring that socialism, as the antithesis of oppression and exploitation of man by man, is of interest to all those who are 'religious or irreligious'.⁶⁴ To weld Islam and Marxism, he went so far as to argue that Marx did not believe in dialectical materialism, but in 'dialectical determinism'.⁶⁵ Determinism, he argued also existed in the Qur'an.⁶⁶ As for dialectics, Shari'ati claimed that it was closer to Islamic logic than formal Aristotelian logic.⁶⁷ Well aware of the fact that the traditional Islamic critique of Marxism was the latter's adherence to materialism, Shari'ati proclaimed that Marxism was vehemently anti-materialist.⁶⁸ Fundamentally modifying and even white-washing Marx's animosity towards religion, he argued that the religions

that Marx assailed, were polytheistic. In *Eslamshenasi*, in short, Shari'ati tried to render his socially-conscious, anti-capitalist and anti-exploitative Islam compatible with Marxism.⁶⁹ As if engaging in a self-criticism, in 'Mankind' he criticizes those intellectuals who tried to salvage Marxism.⁷⁰

Whereas in *Eslamshenasi*, Shari'ati argued that the view which distinguished between physical and metaphysical, material and abstract, body and spirit was not Islamic, in 'Mankind', he argued that the fundamental contradiction between Islam and Marxism was that Islam was based on belief in the immaterial spirit of God, while Marxism was based on materialism.⁷¹ In *Eslamshenasi*, whatever faults Shari'ati found with communism, he acquitted Marx and attributed them primarily to Stalin.⁷² In 'Mankind', however, he made a point of emphasizing that the deviations and aberrations that had been attributed to Stalin were in fact rooted in Marx and Marxism.⁷³ In *Eslamshenasi*, Shari'ati accused Stalin of 'economism' and the coining of the term 'historical materialism'.⁷⁴ In his attempt to absolve Marxism of any accusation of reductionism, economism or materialistic determinism, in *Eslamshenasi* Shari'ati reiterated that those who attacked Marxism on the grounds that it was based on economic determinism were confusing vulgar or official Marxism with scientific Marxism.⁷⁵ In 'Mankind', Marx is labelled as the mastermind of vulgar 'economism' and the father of materialism.⁷⁶

An important and noteworthy feature of 'Mankind', which clearly distinguishes it from *Eslamshenasi* is Shari'ati's correct usage and definition of certain Marxian concepts. In contrast to his confusion over the terms base, infra-structure and super-structure in *Eslamshenasi*, Shari'ati's presentation and definition of such concepts in 'Mankind' is in perfect accordance with Marx's formulations. What is unprecedented in this work is the use of a long and direct quotation – some sixteen lines from the preface to the 'Critique of Political Economy'.⁷⁷ The fact that he uses a relatively lengthy quote indicates that 'Mankind' is a researched piece of written work and not an impromptu lecture. Not in the habit of using notes of any kind for his speeches or lectures, Shari'ati could not have easily memorized and reproduced such a passage down to its finest detail. Affirming the contents of his article 'Mankind', published in *Kayhan*, Shari'ati referred to it in name, in a letter to his son Ehsan written in February of 1977 – the first and probably the only time Shari'ati referred to this work.⁷⁸

In his lecture, 'Return to oneself' ('Bazgasht be khishtan') delivered at the University of Jondishapur some four years before his insurrectionary speeches at Ershad, which should not be confused with the new 'Return to oneself' ('Bazgasht be khish'), published in *Kayhan*, Shari'ati proclaimed that his concept of religion was such that even intellectuals void of any religious feelings could relate to it and even use it.⁷⁹ Later, in his lectures on *Eslamshenasi* at Ershad, Shari'ati followed the same conciliatory pattern of thought and maintained that his path to Islam was through the grasp and eventual transcendence of gnosticism, existentialism and socialism as an ideology and a socioeconomic system.⁸⁰ His Islam in *Eslamshenasi*, therefore, included elements similar to, if not belonging to socialism and

existentialism. As if repudiating his past conciliatory position towards Marxism and his own historical, sociological and economic use of Marxian concepts and ingredients, in 'Mankind', Shari'ati argues that independently, Marxism and Islam were well integrated, complete and perfect ideologies. Neither, he argued, could be decomposed or deconstructed and subsequently reconstructed with certain features of the other. Therefore, if one ideology borrowed and employed an aspect of another ideology, such a reconstruction, Shari'ati argued, would lead to the complete breakdown of the impure ideology.⁸¹ For anyone familiar with Shari'ati's works until the closure of Ershad, such a statement is a clear disclaimer of a distinct trait in Shari'ati's political perception and works. It is also a refutation of the methodology used in developing the core theoretical propositions in the first and second lessons of *Eslamshenasi*, which Shari'ati considered his key ideological contribution and manifesto. 'Mankind' was not only a revision of the most provocative aspects of Shari'ati's ideas, but a clear theoretical attack on the Mojahedin as well as an anti-Marxist manifesto. The attack on Marxists and those who combined Marxism with Islam could also be construed as an attack on the Fada'ian and the Mojahedin guerilla organizations, leading the armed struggle against the regime.

In his insurrectionary speeches as well as his lectures on *Eslamshenasi*, Shari'ati had blended Islam with Marxism and hailed the revolutionary activities of all who fought for the just cause of the people. His revisionist emphasis on the structural and deep-rooted differences between Islam and Marxism – in theory, practice, objectives, tactics and strategy – introduced a rupture that he had meticulously tried to avoid and even bridge in his earlier works. His revised position on the alignment of forces undermined the distinction he had tried to establish between the forces of righteousness or those who had risen to defend the just cause of the people, including the Marxists, and the forces of evil represented by the oppressors (*qasetin*), the traitors (*nakesin*) and the renegades (*mareqin*). In his description of renegades, Shari'ati's examples were of Muslims and never of Marxists. In search of reconciliation with Marxist activists, Shari'ati had gone as far as to say that 'God looks more favourably on a "materialist man" who does not pray God, yet having realized his social responsibility serves the people, than a believer in God, who prays yet not sensing his social responsibility does not serve the people'.⁸²

The immediate reaction to the publication of 'Mankind' revealed the deeply felt anxiety of Shari'ati's friends and followers. The article caused bewilderment, confusion and disbelief among Shari'ati's partisans. They simply did not know what to make of it. Certain controversial issues and doubts lingered. The fact that the public became aware of this work only after it was published in the pro-government daily *Kayhan* gave the impression that Shari'ati had freely decided to contribute it to the newspaper after his release from prison. In the eyes of Shari'ati's followers contributing to *Kayhan* was in itself tantamount to collaboration with the regime. This was the exact feeling the regime wished to stir. The key questions were whether Shari'ati had provided *Kayhan* with the article and whether the article was written in prison. The timing of the publication, a few months after the

schism within the Mojahedin, led to the suspicion that it was aimed at fuelling the infighting between supporters of Muslim and non-Muslim guerilla organizations combatting the shah's regime. In view of the growing hegemony of Marxist ideology among the anti-government guerilla organizations, the anti-Marxist content of the article appeared as a manifesto against armed struggle. At the time, Shari'ati's inability and unwillingness to plainly explain the why, when and where of 'Mankind' added to the perplexity of the situation.

Unable to publicly comment on the publication of the article in *Kayhan*, an account was circulated by Shari'ati's friends explaining its origin. As word got around, the specific facts of the account were somewhat altered and different stories were reported. Yet all accounts were unanimous that the article was the written version of the lectures that Shari'ati had delivered while teaching at the University of Mashhad. It was said to be unknown to the public because SAVAK had confiscated the copies that had been transcribed and prepared by the students. Yet it was said that a certain number of copies had been smuggled out of the printers and were at large. On the issue of the number of such copies and the university at which the students first reproduced the article there were and are differences of opinion.⁸³ According to Puran Shari'at-Razavi, after the publication of 'Mankind' in *Kayhan*, it was Kazem Sami, who informed Shari'ati that some 500 copies of his old lecture were at large, which proved that Shari'ati's article predated its appearance in *Kayhan* and acquitted him of collaboration with the regime.⁸⁴

Overseas newspapers sympathetic to Shari'ati's cause echoed the account circulating in Iran. They tried to prove that the article was written well before Shari'ati was imprisoned and that, through its publication, the regime intended to denigrate Shari'ati, who had by no means collaborated while in prison. A recurrent theme in the account circulated at the time was that even though Shari'ati had tried to bring a lawsuit against *Kayhan* as well as getting a disclaimer published in the newspaper, he had been told that both courses of action needed permission from SAVAK and therefore his attempts at unfolding the regime's plot against him had remained ineffectual.⁸⁵ Abdolkarim Lahiji, a lawyer who was regularly involved with political dissidents, recalls that Sadr Haj-Seyyed Javadi, another lawyer involved with religious political dissidents, called him in relation to the publication of Shari'ati's article and proposed that the two men should look into the possibility of a lawsuit against *Kayhan*. Lahiji recalls that the issue was never pursued and no legal action ever taken. Furthermore, Lahiji recalls that, after the publication of the article, he met with Shari'ati on two occasions, yet Shari'ati never mentioned anything about the article or his intention to take legal action against *Kayhan*.⁸⁶ Minachi, who remained very close to Shari'ati after the closure of Ershad recalls that even though Shari'ati wrote a scathing letter to Mesbahzadeh, the owner of *Kayhan*, he was not sure whether he ever sent it. On the issue of the law suit Minachi confirmed that no action was ever initiated.⁸⁷

On 26 February 1976 or less than two weeks after the publication of 'Mankind', a clandestine circular was distributed in the name of the Qom Seminary School

warning that it was a ploy by the regime to divide the ranks of the people. The shah and his regime were accused of smearing the unblemished and upright character of outstanding Islamic figures such as Shari'ati and fostering schism and division. The circular maintained that the article was a part of Shari'ati's lectures at Mashhad University and was published without his permission. It also remarked that the publication of 'Mankind' intended to 'provoke the combatant non-Islamic forces against the Islamic forces'.⁸⁸

Some three and a half months later, the Qom Seminary School published a circular in which it denied any association with the first circular and attributed it to the Union of Islamic Students' Association in Europe. In this revealing announcement, the Qom Seminary School acknowledged Shari'ati's 'new convictions', supported it and added that Shari'ati's previous position was being used by known anti-religious elements, who were trying to deceive the people.⁸⁹ The circular rejoiced at Shari'ati's revised posture. Repeating a variation of his ideas in 'Mankind', it announced that 'there can be no alliance between Islamic and non-Islamic forces and Muslims would always wage holy war against Marxism'.⁹⁰ The circular candidly opined that the only true struggle the Seminary School was ever interested and engaged in was an anti-Marxian revolution. In the end, the circular praised Dr Ali Shari'ati for opening up a new chapter in the struggle against Marxist thoughts. Later, the full text of 'Mankind' was reprinted a few times and widely distributed by members of the Qom Seminary School, under the title *Mankind, Marxism and Islam*.

After 'Mankind', the second serialized article entitled 'Return to Oneself' by Doctor Ali Shari'ati appeared in *Kayhan* of 22 April 1976.⁹¹ It was divided into some thirty three different parts and ended on 22 June 1976. Sending a clear message to its readers, *Kayhan* published most of Shari'ati's articles right next to another serialized article called 'Reza Shah the Great; Saviour and Re-Constructor of Iran.' Shari'ati's serialized article was entirely different from his speech at Jondishapur University. In the Persian title of the two works, often confused with one another, there is a slight nuance which sets them apart. The earlier lecture at Jondishapur University is called 'Bazgasht be khishtan', while the article published in *Kayhan* is called 'Bazgasht be khish'. The content, subjects, themes, tone and emphases in the two articles are clearly different.

In the new 'Return', Shari'ati simplified Iran's past and present problems to a loss of individual and national cultural identity among 'intellectual groups' as well as the 'masses'. In this article, exalting the 'Iranian spirit', he tried to prove that Iran, a nation that had lost its true identity, could regain its past grandeur only if it returned to its authentic identity composed of the Iranian 'personality' and the Islamic ideology.⁹² Focusing on the destructive role of Western cultural imperialism and foreign ideologies in fostering national alienation, he accused 'modernist intellectuals' of acting as the vanguards of the Western cultural 'assault' on the 'historical, traditional and ethical values' of the people.⁹³

While referring to the dangers of liberalism and modernism, the article is mainly

concerned with the adverse effects of Marxism. Shari'ati criticizes Marxism from several aspects. Firstly, it is a philosophy alien to the 'Iranian, Islamic and Eastern' identity of the Iranian people. Secondly, it is a philosophy at war with 'the existential personality', 'the historical self' and 'the independent existential identity' of the people. Shari'ati considers Marxism as an enemy engaged in a battle against the peoples' 'authentic national culture'. Thirdly, Iranian Marxists are alienated and estranged beings who 'think, feel, speak, theorize, choose and act incorrectly and erroneously'.⁹⁴ Subsequently it is evident to Shari'ati that Iranians who analyse and assess their society through a Marxist optic, will certainly go astray.⁹⁵ Fourthly, there is a contradiction between Marxism and nationalism. Dwelling on the point that in theory, Marxism negates national independence and seeks to break down the walls of 'nationality' through its invitation to and imposition of internationalism, Shari'ati presents Marxism as a threat to national sovereignty and integrity.⁹⁶ Finally, in order to convey a message of national reconciliation, Shari'ati assails Marxism for having converted 'class-warfare' and 'proletarian internationalism' into a 'fundamental truth'.⁹⁷

Faced with colonialism and imperialism, the main enemies of the people, Shari'ati argues that all people within a nation, irrespective of their class, are in bondage. Therefore, neither 'class struggle' nor 'internal contradictions' – by which he implied internal political conflicts – constituted the major contradictions of the epoch. Arguing that nationalism negated class analysis and struggle, Shari'ati called for the necessity of 'class cooperation'.⁹⁸ Intent on proving that any type of struggle against economic or political injustice is inappropriate, he argues that Islam denies class analysis 'based on economic contradictions in society'.⁹⁹ Trying to re-channel the combative energy of the youth from political struggle to an abstract cultural struggle, he over-emphasizes the danger and magnifies the destructive powers of cultural imperialism.¹⁰⁰ In an attempt to prove his newly acquired conviction, he accused those who believed in and engaged in class and political struggle, of involvement in a 'schismatic conspiracy' tearing apart and weakening the united front of the people against colonialism and imperialism.¹⁰¹ By attacking the Iranian guerilla movement, Shari'ati was undermining his own reputation and heritage. Shari'ati's ceaseless attack on the evil triad of economic exploitation, political repression and clerical stupefaction, a trade-mark in just about all his works, was now being labelled as an act of 'schismatic conspiracy'.

Praising nationalistic culturalism as an antidote and a countervailing power to Marxism and internationalism, Shari'ati rejected all shades of internationalism; Islamic, Christian, proletarian or socialist. All, he argued, are a form of imperialism. Calling for a return to national roots, identity and culture, Shari'ati argued that national resurgence was in need of 'faith in oneself' and 'self-consciousness'.¹⁰² A return to Shi'i Islamic values and nationalism was identified as the means to regaining ones authentic self. In his scathing attack on Safavid Shi'ism, however, Shari'ati had painstakingly demonstrated and criticized the Safavid's ploy to detach Iran from the larger Islamic community. Safavid rule, the embodiment of

anti-values to Shari'ati, was found on the bases of a perverted Shi'ism and Iranian nationalism.¹⁰³ In very strong terms, Shari'ati had condemned Iranian nationalism, inseparable from the dynastic rule of the kings, as fascistic, monarchic, chauvinistic and racist.¹⁰⁴ In *Return*, the very same concept, suddenly became a liberating cultural notion completely free of jingoism and racism. In Shari'ati's insurrectionary discourse, nationalism was a divisive ruse to shatter the unifying and revolutionary force of Islamic internationalism, whose mission was to eradicate all class and social antagonisms.¹⁰⁵ In *Return* nationalism became a magic wand. It was the unifying force rendering class and social struggle unnecessary, while battling the divisiveness and evil of internationalism, the mission of which was to perpetuate the subjugation of all third world countries. Shari'ati was engaging in a veritable Orwellian 'Newspeak'.

In *Return to which oneself?*, which should be considered a theoretical sequel to *Return to oneself*, Shari'ati developed his arguments revolving around the idea of replacing social, political and economic struggle, strife and warfare with cooperation, unity and reconciliation. This work, containing themes exactly resembling those elaborated in *Mankind* and *Return to oneself* is concerned with the stage of the revolutionary movement, the role of intellectuals in it and, most importantly, the inappropriateness of armed struggle. Shari'ati argues here that intellectuals should not lead revolutionary movements. He accused those intellectuals who had led such movements of deviation and the subjection of their own people to greater subjugation and exploitation than that committed by colonial powers. Exaggerating the adverse role of the intellectuals, Shari'ati even suggested that they could not be trusted with leadership since, tempted by money and power, they would become corruptible.¹⁰⁶ Directly attacking the guerilla movement, Shari'ati announced that, 'intellectuals should not replace the people and take over the leadership of a revolutionary movement'.¹⁰⁷ Refuting the vanguard responsibility of intellectuals, faced with an 'unawakened people', Shari'ati inconsistently envisaged and emphasized a spontaneous mass movement.¹⁰⁸ In view of his belief in the underdeveloped social consciousness of the masses, Shari'ati effectively argued for the postponing of the mass movement or the revolution. In the meantime, the mission of the intellectuals was to enlighten the people, not to lead them. Back in 1969, Shari'ati had adopted a similar position, emphasizing that the role of intellectuals was not to plan and advise on 'how to build the future'.¹⁰⁹ Once again implicitly calling upon the guerillas, who were intellectuals, to lay down their arms, he argued that their responsibility was to engage in theoretical and cultural reflection and ultimately participation in the political and ideological education of the people.¹¹⁰ Realizing the consternation that his new position would create among his old students, Shari'ati wrote, 'to those who would ask in surprise and dismay if this is enough, I say yes this is all and this is enough'.¹¹¹

In yet another important departure from his insurrectionary approach and style, in symbolic terms, Shari'ati cautioned against radical and revolutionary words and acts. Referring to expediency as the 'geography of the word', he argued that in

politics and sociology one should take into account the prevailing circumstances and conditions.¹¹² Sounding very much like the pragmatists he had always criticized, he argued that 'unaware of the principle that there is a particular place for every word', society would be exposed to the tricks of colonialism.¹¹³ More to the point, he claimed that one should not be fooled by the 'righteousness of an idea', without having properly evaluated the absorptive capacity of the society in which the idea was launched.¹¹⁴ In contrast to his usual praise and encouragement of romanticism and idealism highlighted in Imam Hossein's utopian campaign, Shari'ati's new position demonstrated a down-to-earth and rational disposition. Righteousness was no longer the sole criteria for action. Heeding against revolutionary action, which he had promoted, Shari'ati opined that a socio-political idea that may be considered as progressive, constructive and appropriate for a society and at a particular time may be destructive and ruinous at another time and for another society.¹¹⁵ In a thinly veiled reference to the guerilla movement, Shari'ati wrote, 'those who drive at high speed to attract attention, make life miserable for the people.'¹¹⁶ Shari'ati the teacher of righteousness who had always lashed out against prudent dissimulation and sacrificing truth and justice at the altar of expediency was now arguing in favour of realism and pragmatism.

Even Abu Zarr, Shari'ati's enraged model of righteousness, resistance, revolutionary intransigence and proper socio-political conduct underwent a character operation. Well aware of the power and influence of the symbol that he had created, Shari'ati set out to obfuscate, modify and pacify the message and the image which incarnated his ideology. The revolutionary message that Shari'ati had given his disciples was incontestable. In *Return to which Oneself?*, Shari'ati tried to rectify and even reverse his original message, delivered through Abu Zarr. In a footnote, Shari'ati wrote; 'Firstly, Abu Zarr does not say that the dispossessed have the right to or should engage in armed insurrection, he simply says that I am surprised that they do not engage in armed insurrection! Secondly, he [Abu Zarr] does not say that they should revolt against the regime, the ruling classes, colonizers and capitalists, but against all people, since they share a common responsibility in the fact that I have no bread at home.'¹¹⁷ These words were aimed at undoing what had already been done and questioning certitudes that had already been created. The low pitch of Shari'ati's revisionist chants, were lost in the rumbling roar of the anti-regime snowball that he had created among the youth.

On one other major issue, Shari'ati pursued his scepticism about already ingrained certitudes. Shari'ati had always called for combatting the three plus one evils of capitalism, despotism, religious treachery (*zar va zur va tazvir*) and later colonialism as the main sources of social evil. By opening up the issue of the stage of revolution and subsequently the debate over the main contradictions of the epoch, he questioned the anti-capitalist and anti-state or anti-despotic revolutionary activities of the guerillas. Identifying colonialism as the main socioeconomic problem of his epoch, Shari'ati argued that engaging in class struggle, while the anti-colonial movement was under way, was divisive, splitting the alliance of all

freedom-loving and anti-colonial forces.¹¹⁸ The nationalistic anti-colonial struggle had to precede class struggle. Shari'ati's repeated arguments in support of delaying class struggle and thus maintaining national unity until the expulsion and defeat of colonialism was a standard argument used by leaders of liberation movements struggling against foreign occupying forces. The employment of such an argument in the context of Iran, unoccupied by foreign forces, simply seemed irrelevant. Through a call to an unpalpable nationalist and anti-colonial movement, Shari'ati was making a case for national reconciliation and cooperation at a time when the guerilla movement was battling the status quo.

At the height of his insurrectionary discourse, Shari'ati had passionately pleaded for revolutionary action and had meticulously disproved the position of those who argued that theory and reflection should precede action.¹¹⁹ The three revisionist works present a clear rupture with Shari'ati's insurrectionary discourse and raise certain questions to which answers are not readily available. Was Shari'ati's shift of optic the result of a natural development and transformation of ideas? Why were some of these positions re-modified, resembling positions taken in his insurrectionary discourse, long after his release and before his death? If it is assumed that the revisionist writings were obtained under duress, one need not find intellectual reasons for its contents. As Shari'ati himself argued, the 'geography of the word' or expediency necessitated its writing. The degree to which the contents of the three revisionist articles reflected Shari'ati's true convictions might be determined by comparing them to his writings some time after his release from prison and before his death. If a logical and thematic linkage or flow of ideas can be identified between the later writings and the revisionist articles then one would be forced to conclude that his revisionist writings constituted the beginning of a break with the Ershad paradigm, otherwise they would have to be considered as expedient aberrations in Shari'ati's works.

The fact that 'Return' published in *Kayhan* was not a pre-prison work or at least no one has credibly argued, let alone proved it to be so, poses the problem of how it got into the hands of *Kayhan*. If we accept the notion that it was SAVAK and not Shari'ati that gave the two articles by Shari'ati for publication to *Kayhan*, an explanation has to be provided for how SAVAK came into possession of these articles. Until further research is done, the plausible hypothesis remains that the article along with 'Mankind' were both extracted from Shari'ati by SAVAK. 'Return to which oneself', however, was written after Shari'ati's release from prison. It does not contain the anti-Marxist invectives and the nationalistic jingoism of 'Mankind' and 'Return', yet its principle message of the inappropriateness of armed struggle can be construed as conciliatory to the regime.

The Curtain Falls

A few days after his release from prison, Ali and his family went to Mashhad to visit Mohammad-Taqi and friends. After a couple of weeks the whole family returned to Tehran.¹ Once the exhilaration of having Ali among them wore off, each member of the family picked up their normal routine of life. For Ali, however, this was a most difficult period in his life. His release from prison was obviously a blessing, but the inactivity that was imposed upon him was disorientating and difficult to deal with. He was the untamed bird, despising confinement and domestication. The routine of regular life burdened and depressed him. Prison was hard, yet it presented a challenge, and the challenge gave meaning to his life. Premature retirement at home, without a mission, an audience to speak to, or a bustling intellectual environment was a cage from which there seemed no escape. He was condemned, to 'simply live'. This, he neither knew how to nor enjoyed.² Under unofficial house arrest, Shari'ati did not hesitate to declare that his home annoyed and irritated him.³ He depicted his travails and regular nightmare during this period in his own words. As soon as he tried to conform to simple everyday life at home, like a maverick sensing an earthquake, he would want to take-off for the desert. Yet he had no desert to escape to. His world went no further than the wall that separated the small garden from the street. Beyond the wall, he wrote, bandits and hunters had set an ambush 'to shoot, tame, or shackle him'.⁴ Unable to accept life inside his home and forbidden to live the life he wanted outside, he was condemned to a living death. He wrote, 'I am an injured patient, tied to a bed, even irritated by my nurse.'⁵ Once the insidious rumours, insinuations and accusations which followed the articles in *Kayhan* began to spread, he felt even more frustrated, dejected and dispirited – as if the walls were slowly closing in on him. Sensing their growing pressure on his chest, he 'smelled the odour of death'.⁶

All accounts relate that, after his release from prison, Shari'ati was plunged into an introverted state of melancholy and depression. This state of mind was not alien to him. He called it the years of darkness. He recalled how he slept during the day to 'steal away from life' and stayed up during the night curled up in a corner of his room, holding his knees close to his chest, contemplating 'the ever pouring showers of anguish and pain' in silence.⁷ No man of the house, Ali did not know

how to keep himself busy or make himself useful. Puran recalls that, faced with all the chores, she once lost her temper at both Ali and Ehsan who were idly chatting away. Handing them some runner beans, she told them to cut the ends and chop them up. After a short while, Ali gave up and walked away observing that there was no need to cut them down, since once they were cooked any one who wanted them chopped would be able to chew them to the right size.⁸ Ali did, however, try to assume his paternal responsibilities. With Puran's departure to Mashhad for a couple of weeks of rest, the responsibility of looking after the children was left to Ali. Susan, Ali's eldest daughter remembers that Baba Ali, as his children called him, would wake up every morning, set the breakfast table and serve them poached eggs which he called 'a nude egg' (*tokhm-e morgh-e oryan*).⁹ He even took an interest in the studies of his daughters, Susan and Sara, who were fourteen and thirteen respectively. He would give them subjects on which they were supposed to reflect and write. These included; 'life', 'death', 'hope', 'what do you think about when you walk on the carpet?' and 'should we help the poor or struggle against poverty?'¹⁰ He even organized outings for the children. Wearing his usual suit and tie and his everyday shoes, he took them mountain climbing and tried to teach them how to climb in snow and ice. After slipping and falling in the middle of his demonstration, he readily concluded that this was not the way to climb!¹¹ Before returning home, he took the children to a café.

Describing his state of mind during the first year and a half after his release, he wrote: 'during this period I was not myself, I was simply trying to stay alive, and the only way to do so was to forget myself, that is to say, not to be myself, otherwise I would not have been able to put up with myself and would have died.'¹² In his attempt to get away from himself, he was hardly in the mood to see anyone, even close friends. He made a habit of hiding away upstairs in his room. When friends rang the door bell, the children would sneak upstairs and innocently ask their father if he was at home. Impatiently, Ali would answer, 'can't you see I am not here!'¹³ Throughout this eighteen months, he rarely socialized or left the house. At nights he would sit on the mattress on the floor, drink tea from the samovar in the corner of his room and read or write while he smoked incessantly.¹⁴ Responding to concerned remarks about his heavy smoking, he remarked, 'I have quit using matches not smoking cigarettes!'¹⁵ Anxious about his health and state of mind, his family tried hard to make him feel at ease. On a trip to the Caspian coast during the summer of 1975, especially arranged so that he would be able to relax and unwind, Ali was so depressed and caught up in his memories of the Komiteh prison, that he could hardly enjoy a swim. He could only sit by the sea and smoke his cigarette.¹⁶ The fact that he endured these two years of frustration and anguish and managed to stay alive, he believed, was his greatest achievement.¹⁷ Had he not been obliged to live, he would have liked to set fire to himself in front of Tehran University.¹⁸

Isolated from the outside world and irritated at having to live a 'normal' life, Shari'ati focused his attention on his son, Ehsan, who was sixteen at the time.

Ehsan had followed the model of the modern Islamic intellectual that his father had so vividly outlined before going to prison. He had studied Arabic while his father was in prison and had become actively politicized. Ali spent long hours playing chess with him and reading to him out of *Nahj al-Balagha*. He provided Ehsan with a bibliography of recommended texts.¹⁹ During the time Ali Shari'ati was in prison, Ehsan had become involved with some of his father's old students at Ershad, employed at Abdol-Ali Bazargan's architectural firm.²⁰ Members of this group were either actively involved with the Mojahedin or sympathisers of the organization. Ehsan, who also frequented the politicized Islamic students at the Faculty of Social Sciences, had become inclined towards the Mojahedin and although not a member was in contact with an organizational liaison person.²¹ Such a relationship clearly exposed him to arrest and imprisonment. On his release from prison, Shari'ati became aware and anxious about Ehsan's involvement with the Mojahedin of which he did not approve. He wanted his son to 'reduce' his political activities. By talking and reasoning with Ehsan, he tried to reorient him towards more in-depth theoretical studies rather than active engagement in 'unknown political activities'.²² Given the power of the status quo, the configuration of competing forces and ideologies and their final objective was posing complex problems for Ali Shari'ati.

Frequently, Shari'ati kept Ehsan awake until some hours after midnight discussing various political and philosophical topics. One of the issues raised was the relationship between ideology and organizational activities.²³ At this time, Ali placed greater emphasis on the articulation of a solid Islamic ideology, while Ehsan's questions revolved around the ideal organization which could incorporate that ideology and effect change. Puran recalls that Ehsan's late night discussions with his father, and his sleepy eyes the next day, got him into trouble at school.²⁴ As soon as Ehsan's organizational liaison person was arrested, the risk of his own arrest increased. From the point of view of the authorities, the fact that he was Ali's son would, if he were imprisoned, have certainly aggravated his situation. Given the circumstances, the family finally decided to send him abroad. The regime's reaction to Ehsan's application for a passport and his attempt to leave the country under the name of Mazinani was also a test of the political waters. If Ehsan was allowed to go, perhaps Ali could also do so under the name Mazinani. Sending a yet 'unformed bud' to an unknown foreign land was not easy for Ali Shari'ati.²⁵ Yet more worried about Ehsan's safety and security, Shari'ati and his family witnessed his departure on 27 May 1976. As he took his leave, Ali promised his son that, under whatever circumstances, he would leave Iran and join him, where he would continue with his activities.²⁶ After their farewells on an early Wednesday morning, Ali Shari'ati never saw his son again. He now found himself in an even greater vacuum. In his first letter to Ehsan in Washington, Seattle, he explained that although loneliness was his philosophy in life, separateness his religion and solitude his world-outlook, during the thirty hours since Ehsan had left, loneliness had acquired a new meaning, he was experiencing something quite new.²⁷

Despite Shari'ati's release from prison the authorities remained uncertain about his reactions, behaviour and associations. All the evidence indicates that he was placed under regular and close surveillance: his movements and his outings were monitored, his phone was tapped, he was regularly summoned to SAVAK headquarters, and SAVAK called on him at his house, threatening him.²⁸ From the day SAVAK ordered Shari'ati's first article to be published in *Kayhan*, it also instructed its agents to tighten their control on him. A memo from Sabeti's Third Bureau acknowledged that an article entitled 'Marxism against Islam' by Shari'ati was to appear in *Kayhan* of 14 February 1976 and ordered that Shari'ati and his friends' reaction to its publication be monitored.²⁹ Some twenty days after the appearance of the *Kayhan* article, a somewhat baffling statement was sent by a SAVAK operative to 312th Office of SAVAK, which dealt with religious dissidents.³⁰ The statement reflected the absence of any coordination within various branches of SAVAK or its member: it said that although Shari'ati's article 'refuting his ideas and views' has appeared in *Kayhan*, it appeared that he wanted to regain visibility and fame. The operative opined that the article did not make up for all Shari'ati's previous subversive activities. At the bottom of this short statement three other operatives jotted their opinions. The first, with the pseudonym of Shanbeh (Saturday), said that in order to change the opinion of his followers, Shari'ati should renounce his books *Ummat va Emamat*, (The Islamic Community and its Leadership) *The Last of the Prophets* and *Kavir*. The third commented that it seemed as if, after lengthy discussions with security officials, Shari'ati was now willing to make up for his past mistakes. He recommended that the time was right for a television interview with him so that he could publicly confirm the immaturity of his previous positions. At the bottom of the memo a seemingly authoritative statement in handwriting rejected the suggestion of Shari'ati's television interview and added, 'If it was opportune for the Doctor (Shari'ati) to make a speech on television, it would have already happened.'³¹

Despite SAVAK's tight control during the first year of Shari'ati's release, it seemed as if the daily and regular surveillance became more relaxed as time went by. After the Spring of 1976, Shari'ati gradually started to meet people. Safavieh, a school-friend with whom he always kept contact, recalled that, sometime after his release, Ali called him and asked him to go over to his house for lunch. The two men talked from early morning until late that afternoon, interrupting their reminiscing only for a lunch of *baqalapolu*, or broad bean pilau and meat.³² Other than members of the family and old friends, during this period Shari'ati met with different people, almost all of whom were in one way or another politicized. He also saw influential members of the clergy in private meetings where, on different occasions, men such as Beheshti, Motahhari, Abolfazl Zanjani, Lahuti, Khamene'i, Khoiniha and Mohammad-Taqi Ja'fari were present. In one of these meetings, Beheshti alluded to a rumour about Shari'ati's willing submission of the articles appearing under his name in *Kayhan* and inquired about the truth. Irritated, Shari'ati is said have responded, 'I am amazed at you for asking such a question. It

seems as if you are ignorant of what is going on in the world. The enemies of Islam are trying to isolate and chase away all those who are introducing the authentic Islam. With the aid of the official custodians of religion and the merchants of paradise they are also trying to present a religion which would repulse today's truth-loving generation, paving the way for deviationary doctrines to return.³³ Whereas to Maleki, present at the meeting, Shari'ati's explanations seemed more than convincing, to Musavi Khoiniha, also present, his answer seemed evasive.³⁴

Even though Shari'ati met with Motahhari on several occasions, Motahhari continued to bear a five-year-old grudge against him. His dislike for Shari'ati was personal, professional and perhaps even ideological. After Shari'ati's release from prison and during the last few months before his departure overseas, Motahhari, who pursued his campaign of cleansing Shari'ati's writings of what he considered to be 'anti-Islamic' notions, sent several messages inviting him to attend a gathering of Islamic experts, before whom Motahhari intended to prove their 'anti-Islamic' nature. Motahhari even threatened Shari'ati with a 'straightforward and well-documented critique that would cost him dearly' if he refused to amend his works.³⁵ According to Motahhari, Shari'ati finally sent him word that he was going to give full power to Mohammad-Taqi Ja'fari and Mohammad-Reza Hakimi to criticize and correct his works to Motahhari's taste.³⁶ As it turned out, Shari'ati gave such a power only to Hakimi.

In a letter to Khomeini, even after Shari'ati's death, Motahhari spoke of him with great disdain, accusing him of dishonesty and writing: 'the smallest sin of this man [Shari'ati] is that of slandering the *rowhaniyat*, the clergy.' Motahhari branded Shari'ati's followers as 'deviationist' and asked Khomeini to order a ban on the publication of his works before they were reviewed and corrected by Hakimi or a group assigned by Khomeini. Referring to Shari'ati's two articles in *Kayhan*, he recommended them to Khomeini and wrote that even though Shari'ati had informed Beheshti and Khamene'i that they were older works, 'there are sufficient proofs that they were both written recently.'³⁷ Motahhari labelled 'Mankind ...' 'an anti-Marxist work and assessed it positively. Referring to the shah's single party, Rastakhiz or Resurgence, he dubbed Shari'ati's 'Return ...' as the 'philosophy of Resurgence'.³⁸ Motahhari even went as far as publicly calling Shari'ati, 'the damned' (*mal'un*). Such behaviour caused sharp reactions even among the clergy. Khalkhali, for example, is said to have retaliated incisively in support of Shari'ati.³⁹

Minachi recalled that some time after Shari'ati's release from prison, his friends decided to hold regular private meetings at the homes of different people who felt close to him so that he would be able to voice his opinions and gradually come out of his shell.⁴⁰ Over a year after his release, private sessions, during which lunch or dinner was served, were held three or four times a month. The hosts were mainly members or sympathizers of Bazargan's Iran Freedom Movement while the twenty to thirty guests were a mixture of the same political tendency and some of Ershad's old clerical and non-clerical contributors. At these sessions, Shari'ati usually made a speech, which was recorded on tape and later transcribed. Depending on his

mood, he lectured on topics which were more socio-religious if not purely religious in content. These lectures were essentially non-political. Most of his short works are the product of these sessions at the house of people such as Minachi, Sadr Haj-Seyyed Javadi and Homayun. At this time, Shari'ati also started lecturing privately to students. Fakhreddin Hejazi, recalled that during one of these private lectures, held at his house, Shari'ati spoke from one o'clock in the afternoon until three in the morning.⁴¹

Shari'ati's old students, who had either joined the Mojahedin and were involved in the armed struggle or continued to be their sympathizers, also found ways to visit him. Among them was Hassan Aladpush, a Mojahed who was involved in a series of urban guerilla activities and killed in a gun-battle only a short time after his visit. On his last visit, Aladpush, who was accompanied by Najafi, an old student of Shari'ati's at Ershad and also a sympathiser of the Mojahedin. The two had come to consult with Shari'ati. Aladpush was also interested in Shari'ati's reaction to the ideological schism within the Mojahedin.⁴² They came at night and stayed until the next morning discussing philosophical and political issues. According to Ehsan Shari'ati, both performed their regular prayers early in the morning before leaving – something of a riddle given the fact that it is maintained that by this time Hassan Aladpush had joined the Marxist wing of the Mojahedin.

At Mashhad, Shari'ati was invited by Ayatollah Lahuti to attend a meeting with members of the Mojahedin's Central Committee who had recently declared their ideological conversion to Marxism.⁴³ It is not clear whether Shari'ati ever accepted this invitation. At this time he was also approached by some of the remaining Muslim members of the Mojahedin, who solicited his opinions on the events within the Mojahedin and asked for an analysis of the current state of affairs. Shari'ati's article, 'Gnosticism, Equality and Freedom' ('Erfan, Barabari, Azadi'), transcribed from a speech at home, was a response to this request⁴⁴ and it was given to Mas'ud Motahedin, Mahbubeh's brother and a sympathiser of the Mojahedin, for distribution among politicized students.⁴⁵ The article generated certain questions and Shari'ati's responses were also transcribed, duplicated and distributed.⁴⁶

The increasing intensity of the armed struggle during 1976–77 took its toll among some of Shari'ati's closest and dearest students. The death of Mahbubeh Motahedin and Hassan Aladpush was an irreparable loss. Mahbubeh was the daughter of Kazem, whom Shari'ati loved and respected like an older brother. Both Hassan and Mahbubeh were like his own children. They had grown up with Shari'ati's doctrine propagated at Ershad. He had performed their marriage ceremony and now he had to write their funeral speech. Hassan and Mahbubeh's death must have had a special significance and meaning for Shari'ati. Its emotional and psychological impact could not even be compared to the death of Ajang, Galavi, Tavakoli and Aryan, Shari'ati's old students at Mashhad. As sensitive and sentimental as Shari'ati was, he must have felt some responsibility. For it seemed as if Hassan and Mahbubeh had lost their lives in the pursuit of a cause he had elaborated so eloquently, but a cause which he himself had come to doubt. Were

they not the true followers of Shari'ati's axiom: 'wage Jihad and kill if you can, if you cannot, accept martyrdom and die'? Had they not fulfilled the historic mission of the 'responsible intellectual'? Were they not the embodiment and glowing symbols of 'Islamic revolutionary beings'? Had Shari'ati continued to believe in 'martyrdom' and the 'red death', his grief and remorse might have been lightened by pride in their glorious act. The pressing issue of the degree of his personal responsibility as well as the hammering question, 'was their death in vain?' must have gradually gnawed at his mind, further plunging him into depression. In a letter to the Motahedins after the death of Hassan and Mahbubeh, Shari'ati wrote: 'how difficult and agonizing it is for me to see you two tonight. Seeing you, makes one feel ashamed of oneself. Being alive, what a severe and insupportable accusation. It feels like carrying a stolen party of goods. Oh! what if one of 'those' [Mojahedin] who have monopolized life and become its true owners were to see us carrying this stolen good, how shameful would it be.'⁴⁷

Rationalization or Radicalization?

Shari'ati's writings in the twenty-five months between his release from prison and his final departure from Iran demonstrate certain trends, some consistent with and some very contradictory to his previous writings. His outlook, represented in some of his works demonstrates a glaring rationalization, pragmatism and even liberalism in the economic sense of the term. On certain issues, his discourse demonstrates a return to his insurrectionary paradigm. On others, Shari'ati follows the logic of his revisionist position. Emphasizing the inevitability of the ultimate social revolution and a classless society, he, however, emphatically insists on the inappropriateness of immediate revolutionary action and the need to defer it to some undetermined future. His standard approach during this period is characterized by a return to revolutionary intellectual rhetoric, recommending theoretical and ideological engagement rather than armed revolutionary struggle.

Four major ideas can be discerned in his post-prison discourse. First, a reassessment of the historical stage of the social movement and the Islamic ideology initiated at Ershad, and subsequently a reassessment of the strategy and tactics needed to sustain the modern Islamic movement. Second, a review of Marxism as an ideology and as a tool to action for revolutionary organizations. Third, a reformulation of the core elements of his ideology, which he called the orientation (*jehatgiri*) of the Islamic movement. Fourth, a comparison between the ideal Islamic economy with a desirable and attainable economic system. Shari'ati's post-prison works were in the form of transcribed speeches, tape-recorded in the privacy of his home or in various private meetings and gatherings or expressed in letters, primarily to Ehsan. In view of the circumstances in which they were produced, they lack the passionate, moving, poetic and romantically utopian style of his pre-prison works. Void of the idealism and energizing spirit so characteristic

of Shari'ati's works, his post-prison literature, except for *Horror* and *Azadi* (freedom) seems to have lost the magical source from which his previous works flowed.

First, rejecting the necessity of action, Shari'ati reiterated that action was to ensue from ideology and not vice versa. Condemning adventurism, Shari'ati dismissed the search for action-oriented ideologies.⁴⁸ He argued that Islam was experiencing its period of 'ideological formation or development' (*takvin-e ideologik*).⁴⁹ This stage, was therefore in urgent need of appropriate intellectual 'nutrition', which in turn could only be provided through reflection. Neglecting the task of ideological development, Shari'ati argued, exposed the nascent ideology to 'frightful and catastrophic consequences' such as the 'conspiracies of the *monafeqin*, or schismatics [the Marxist Mojahedin]'. These blows to the young Islamic ideology would impede and paralyze the 'movement and the struggle'.⁵⁰ Shari'ati placed the responsibility of 'theoretically feeding' the Islamic ideology on 'responsible intellectuals' and warned that it was 'simplistic to expect any theoretical help from the clergy'.⁵¹ Based on his new vision of the historical stage of development, he gave priority to theoretical criticism, debate and development rather than political action. Since the 'responsible intellectual' could not fight as a guerilla and engage in theorizing simultaneously, a choice had to be made. Fully aware of the consequences of his formulations, Shari'ati acknowledged that he did not wish to invoke the classical dichotomy between the theoretical and practical stages of a social movement. Immediately, however, he added that it would be an act of 'destructive and catastrophic immaturity', if theoretical development was neglected and 'all our forces and reserves were only committed to and depreciated in a specific political act [guerilla warfare]'.⁵² The new theoretical mission, Shari'ati claimed, was 'more important and more dangerous than the wielding of the sword'.⁵³ In the most direct manner, he categorically refuted the necessity of armed struggle, which his insurrectionary speeches had so firmly condoned. In his opinion, the prophetic mission of 'responsible intellectuals' could not be accomplished by 'guns and grenades', 'demonstrations and political rallies', 'common and shallow politicking', 'revolutions', 'change of regimes' and 'adventurism'. The 'cultural and intellectual liberation movement' was to be effectuated through 'conveying and imparting (*ebلاغ*)' the message and 'its weapon was the word'.⁵⁴ Shari'ati realized that his cautious change of emphasis could raise questions and even objections. In a letter to a member of the Mojahedin, who had remained loyal to the Islamic ideology, Shari'ati engaged in a masterful play on words. He emphasized that his directives were not expedient formulations aimed at assuring the survival of the Mojahedin, but were for the purpose of assuring their survival 'so that something could be done'.⁵⁵

The enthusiastic, passionate and revolutionary ambiance at Ershad, along with the prevailing politically electrifying circumstances in Iran, had brought out the romantic and utopian Islamic revolutionary in Shari'ati. Throughout Shari'ati's life, spells of reflection in prison had regularly convinced him of the futility of radical revolutionary struggle. Having arrived at such a realization, Shari'ati had

again, throughout his life, tried to communicate his feeling of powerlessness and ineffectiveness to his friends and comrades-in-arms. At Ershad, he had encouraged his followers to take up arms. After prison, he told his disciples, converted to his revolutionary cause, to lay down their guns. Aware of the fact that his writings would continue to influence others to engage in armed struggle, Shari'ati felt compelled to inform them that he had come to the conclusion that the time was not yet ripe. In 1954, Shari'ati had cautioned his friends and followers against political activism and in 1965 his disapproval of rash political adventurism had startled his friends. Some ten years later he again found himself renouncing political adventurism, but this time his direct responsibility was much heavier.

Shari'ati's dislike of political activism, is best reflected and summed up in an important political testament, presenting his account of the highlights of Iran's contemporary history. In a letter to Ehsan, Shari'ati spoke about his wishes and his regrets. Here, he applied the optic that he employed in 'Return ...' to the history of contemporary Iran. He regretted that after Reza Shah's departure all that was gained from the freedom that ensued was 'a return to the reactionary period of the Qajar dynasty', a manifestation of which 'was the veiling of women'.⁵⁶ During the anti-imperialist and oil-nationalization period, Shari'ati lamented that we should have rediscovered ourselves instead of recovering our oil. Had we 'regained our faith, consciousness, ideas and human self', we would have obtained all our riches and our oil.⁵⁷ Referring to his own experience, Shari'ati regretted that intellectuals and the clergy (*rowhaniyat*), who could have forged an alliance, led the people and won the day with their ideas and their faith, abandoned him and failed to fulfill their mission.⁵⁸ Shari'ati praised the 'responsible intellectuals' for the two-pronged struggle they initiated. They had launched the movement, he maintained, by providing an intellectual basis and by sacrificing their lives for the cause. Deploring the immense loss of men and capacities that was inflicted upon the 'responsible intellectuals', in the pursuit of their objectives, he observed that 'if instead of striking the enemy they had employed their mighty blows to strike down the huge Middle-Age walls that had encircled our reason, religion and thoughts ... today we would have had thousands of teachers preaching martyrdom among the masses instead of presenting them with two martyrs'.⁵⁹ Criticizing the intellectuals for having acted first without obtaining the support of the people, Shari'ati characterized the movement, in which he too had played an important role, as a man who walked on his head, with his hands in his pockets and his legs dangling in mid-air.⁶⁰ Grieving the fact that the people who were most in need of enlightenment received nothing but martyrs, Shari'ati declared that his task of conveying (*ebلاغ*) the message was also left unfinished. As for his wishes, Shari'ati hammered at the importance of conveying and transmitting the message as, in his opinion, after the termination of Prophethood 'responsible intellectuals' familiar with religion had the responsibility of the prophets.⁶¹

Second, in relation to Marxism and Marxists, Shari'ati's position hardened at first and then became much more flexible and tolerant. Typical of his initial rage

against the communist split within the Mojahedin, Shari'ati caustically wrote that from Lenin to Mao, 'this justice-loving, scientific and revolutionary liberation movement' has produced 'sixty years of treachery, compromise and anti-popular policies'.⁶² The ideological coup of the Marxists against the Muslims within the Mojahedin Organization undoubtedly played a crucial role not only in Shari'ati's anti-Marxism, but the deep sense of anti-communism of a whole generation of Muslim militants and clerics, who ruthlessly avenged this bloody episode with a bloodier happening after the Iranian revolution. Shari'ati alluded to the ghastly murder of Majid Sharif-Vaqefi and the unsuccessful attempt on the life of Morteza Samadiyeh-Labaf, two loyalists to the original Islamic ideology, by the newly-converted Marxists within the Mojahedin. He assailed the Marxists for their 'savage attacks' and their treachery at a time when the Muslim Mojahedin were waging war against imperialism and 'world capitalism'. Shari'ati wrote, 'they [the Marxist Mojahedin] not only take advantage of our [Muslim Mojahedin's] imprisonment and impairment, but capitalizing on the absence of the 'original founders of the Mojahedin' and the 'dearest of martyrs' opportunistically try to fill in the vacuum created by this absence, thereby laying claim to the mantle of the Organization and its tradition'.⁶³ Rejecting the Marxist Mojahedin's contention that their ideological shift was a natural development and evolution of their past ideology, Shari'ati labelled them as 'opportunists'.⁶⁴ Candidly, Shari'ati mourned the selfless sacrifices of 'our virtuous Mojahedin'.⁶⁵ His clear and direct identification with the Muslim Mojahedin, even after prison, provides sufficient proof of his sense of affinity with and belonging to the Mojahedin and their ideology before the schism, and its Muslim wing after the schism. Shari'ati was the ideological teacher of the Mojahedin's recruits and not necessarily of the Organization. This was the source of compassion he felt towards its members. A Marxist coup against the Muslim ideology was synonymous with the refutation and negation of his own ideology. It is not, therefore, surprising that the Marxist Mojahedin's pamphlet announcing the Organization's change in ideology had directly targeted Shari'ati.

As if the Marxists had broken an undeclared covenant, Shari'ati lashed out at them for not setting aside their 'sectarian hatred' until the 'attainment of liberty'.⁶⁶ Yet in a realistic and rational fashion, Shari'ati argued that in the world theatre, one should not expect ideologies to have pity and compassion for one another. Making a case for the necessity and priority of ideological and theoretical work, he reminded the Islamic Mojahedin that as long as ideological weakness gave the Marxists the slightest chance, they would 'ruthlessly and unabashedly' take advantage of it.⁶⁷ Even though Shari'ati pointed out that every time the Islamic progressive forces had made a well-intentioned overture to the Marxists, they had responded by 'a spit in their face, a blow to their head or a dagger in their back', he presented a highly conciliatory proposition.⁶⁸ Concerned with the Islamic forces' rising hostility towards the Marxists after the bloody events of the schism, Shari'ati made an attempt to prevent excesses and called for reason to prevail.

Dramatically modifying his anti-Marxist position in 'Mankind ...', where he

had argued that Marxism and Islam were antagonistically contradictory ideologies, Shari'ati argued that colonialism was Islam's enemy, while Marxism was its rival and competitor.⁶⁹ On 10 January 1977, addressing the pressing issues of the period in a meeting with Khamene'i, Motahhari, Fakhreddin Hejazi and a group of students, he reiterated his position in relation to the two hostile camps facing Islam. He argued that 'colonialism and world imperialism' constituted Islam's main enemy. The 'objectives and principles' of Islam and colonialism, he claimed, were contradictory. Their enmity was irreconcilable since it was based on an antagonistic contradiction. Marxism, he argued, was a rival or competing ideology, in contradiction with Islam. However, Shari'ati believed that this contradiction was not antagonistic. Marxism and the Islamic ideology, shared common 'ideals and slogans', even though they differed on the 'presentation of their ideas and their manner of summoning'.⁷⁰ It is said that at this meeting Motahhari objected to Shari'ati's formulation, arguing that Marxism was just as dangerous an enemy and not simply a rival ideology. Despite the growing pressure to categorically reject Marxism, Shari'ati's position on Marxism's relation to Islam, gradually became very similar to that outlined in his insurrectionary discourse. In a private interview on the ideological schism within the Mojahedin, which was later circulated by his disciples, he maintained that 'Islam can learn and benefit from Marxism in the anti-capitalist struggle.' However, he added that this learning process was limited to the extent that it did not threaten the fundamentals of the Islamic ideology.⁷¹

Third, reviewing the ethical sources of his discourse, Shari'ati synthesized his old ideals and presented a new triad as the crucial core of his Islamic ideology. He argued that human beings possessed three innate needs, also posing as their ideals. These three needs had, however, been historically separated and isolated from one another. In isolation or in the absence of even one ideal, the others, he opined, became mere fallacies. Freedom, justice and gnosticism, Shari'ati argued, constituted the inseparable triad assuring human felicity.⁷² Without sacrificing one at the altar of others, Shari'ati tried to reconcile Sartre, the spokesman for freedom with Marx, the symbol of social justice and equality and Hallaj, the embodiment of gnosticism.⁷³ The correct orientation (*jahatgiri*) of the Islamic ideology, he maintained, was the pursuit and attainment of this triad, which he presented as the objective of all 'movements, philosophies, ideals, religions and revolutions, throughout history'.⁷⁴ Shari'ati had already toyed with this triad in his lectures on 'Eslamshenasi' at Ershad.⁷⁵ The only new element in this configuration of his ideals was the greater emphasis on gnosticism, which signalled two important developments. First, concerned with the absence of emphasis on traditional Islamic values and practices in his previous discourse, Shari'ati acknowledged the need to 'increase and buttress the gnostic dose' of his ideology.⁷⁶ This was probably in reaction to his own suspicion that his neglect of traditionally Islamic topics had facilitated the ideological transition of the Mojahedin from a radical and revolutionary Islam to Marxism. Shari'ati, therefore, began to speak of the importance of prayers, fasting and individual purification.⁷⁷ Gnosticism was the supposed anti-

dote against the threat of veering towards Marxism. Furthermore, gnosticism constituted a distinctive feature delineating Shari'ati's new radical Islamic ideology from bourgeois and Marxist ideologies, from which it was absent.⁷⁸ Secondly, the emphasis on gnosticism and revolutionary puritanism (*khodsazi-ye enqelabi*) heralded the replacement of social change and revolution as an immediate objective with the concern for individual transformation and perfection. 'To become a revolutionary', Shari'ati wrote, 'one was primarily in need of a mental revolution, a revolution in perception and way of thought.'⁷⁹ According to Shari'ati's reassessment of the prevailing socio-political conditions, revolutionary puritanism, essentially based on gnosticism was a pre-requisite to social transformation.

Based on his new priorities, Shari'ati recommended that before engaging in a social revolution, one had to train oneself as a revolutionary which meant, 'perfecting one's essence of being'.⁸⁰ The path towards such an objective was realized through 'revolutionary puritanism' or 'revolutionary self-formation'. The three essential pillars of 'revolutionary puritanism' were: prayers or entering into a relationship with God, manual work and social struggle.⁸¹ Shari'ati maintained that for intellectuals, 'productive labour' was an aspect of 'political struggle'.⁸² In his new discourse, Shari'ati recommended the replacement of revolutionary political struggle with non-active intellectual engagements. This was a position consistent with his revisionist discourse of social cooperation and political quietism instead of struggle.

Fourth, in discussing the ideal Islamic economic system, Shari'ati declared that he considered all variants of capitalism to be based on *riba* or usury.⁸³ Therefore, implicitly he claimed that capitalism was forbidden by Islam. Acknowledging the prevalence of a non-Islamic economic system, Shari'ati, presented the dilemma of good Muslims living in such a society and wishing to Islamize its economic system. Arguing that in comparison to the feudal system, capitalism was progressive, he suggested that in the attempt to struggle against and negate capitalism, a reversion to feudalism had to be avoided.⁸⁴ Employing a Marxist logic, Shari'ati argued that the annihilation of capitalism required, 'moving in the direction of its current'.⁸⁵ His old Marxist detractor, Akbari, was ridiculed by Shari'ati, for having made the same point back in 1969. Surprisingly, Shari'ati encouraged and invited Muslims to actively participate in their socio-economic life, 'vie for positions of power' and engage in capitalist production and commerce, lest all economic levers would fall into the hands of 'foreigners or class and ideological enemies'.⁸⁶ Muslim capitalists, he argued, could play an important role in financing the development of 'humane ideas', which could inevitably bring about the 'death of capitalism'.⁸⁷ The solution to the dilemma of an existing capitalist and colonial economic infra-structure and the desire for a moral and ethical Islamic super-structure was found in the super-imposition of the moral Islamic super-structure upon the capitalist infra-structure.⁸⁸ Accepting the capitalist system as an inevitable condition, Shari'ati presented the Japanese economy as the model which had succeeded in integrating moral values with capitalism.⁸⁹ Either forgetting his own

statement that all variants of capitalism were based on usury and therefore forbidden, or taking a realistic position in terms of what was objectively attainable, Shari'ati concluded that one variant of capitalism is different from another, just as 'one capitalist is different from another'.⁹⁰ Shari'ati's differentiation between capitalists as compared to his previous categorical condemnation of this class was consistent with his shift of discourse from struggle to cooperation.

Having relativised and attenuated the evils of capitalism, Shari'ati also modified his anti-imperialist discourse. He argued that confronting imperialism was possible by learning from it and competing with it on the economic scene.⁹¹ Shari'ati's new discourse was primarily a call to economic, political and social cooperation on the national stage along with competition and integration on the international stage. Shari'ati's new world view seemed to be based on non-violence and critical co-existence. This kind of perception, the seeds of which appeared in the two articles, 'Mankind ...' and 'Return ...', published in *Kayhan*, was qualitatively different from Shari'ati's insurrectionary, revolutionary and iconoclastic pre-prison discourse.

As real as Shari'ati's change of outlook on certain issues may have been, there are indications of a return to his insurrectionary rhetoric in some of his later interviews. At a private meeting in Mashhad, he referred to his epoch as one in which Mohammad and Marx battled against each other in the hearts of Iranian youth. On the same occasion, he once again declared that he who does not instigate the people to revolt against hunger is an apostate.⁹² Returning to the topics elaborated in his insurrectionary discourse, Shari'ati referred to his radical reinterpretation of the terms dissimulation (*taqiyyeh*), obedience (*taqlid*) and martyrdom (*shahadat*), as key components of modern clandestine warfare and compared the practical revolutionary teachings of his Islamic ideology to the directives of the most revolutionary Latin American organizations of the time.⁹³ In the same meeting, however, he warned against engagement in revolutionary activities to which he alluded as yielding to 'temptations' and the 'emotional atmosphere'.⁹⁴

After prison, Shari'ati may have seemed to be sending contradictory signals, speaking of revolution and condemning revolutionary action. The paradox was that, even after prison, Shari'ati continued to speak about an inevitable bloody revolution, bringing the disinherited masses to power.⁹⁵ He spoke of overthrowing the regime by an armed revolution, but he relegated it to Armageddon (*akhar-e zaman*).⁹⁶ Insistence on the practical revolutionary aspects and credentials of his Islamic doctrine was necessary to present Islam as a revolutionary ideology comparable to Marxism. Simultaneously, however, he counselled against engagement in revolutionary activities. Having created a viable tool for action, he reiterated that the times were not ripe. He sharpened a blade, the use of which he prohibited, before eager eyes. His audience and his readers registered his references to revolutionary Islam and turned a completely deaf ear to his call for national reconciliation and peace. Even before his death, Shari'ati as a mythical symbol of liberation was more powerful than Shari'ati as he was.

In one of his last works, *Horr*, Shari'ati returned to his passionate, poetic and utopian style and content. This work described the last minute and dramatic defection of Horr, a commander in Yazid's army, to Imam Hossein's camp. Shari'ati reflected on and narrated the difficult decision-making process of a man who having distinguished between good and evil, right and wrong, changed direction and orientation, sided with the forces of good with the perfect knowledge that his choice would only earn him destruction and death. This short work is a reverberation of Shari'ati's insurrectionary discourse at Ershad. Once again he defied the politically passive of this world and pressed them to choose sides. Shari'ati posited that in the ever-continuing theatre of war between justice and injustice, the oppressors and the oppressed, each individual was forced to make a choice; thus all were in Horr's position.⁹⁷ Shortly before his departure from Iran, at Homayoun's house, Shari'ati presented his account of Horr to a group of friends. As he finished his emotionally charged lecture, Abolfazl Zanjani was in tears and most of the others were greatly moved. Motahhari and Khamene'i, however, began to comment on the way Shari'ati had reconstructed the story, but their critical review was cut short by Sa'idi's curt reprisal and rebuttal.⁹⁸

Could it be that after a long period of inner struggle, soul-searching or ironically enough a return to his true self, Shari'ati was returning to the same ideas, style, tone and even utopian passion that constituted his pre-prison trade mark? Had he rediscovered or regained the magical source from which his ideas flowed? Was his revolutionary paradigm, which reflected his true emotional essence once again liberated from whatever forces that had come to harness it? Perhaps, as Shari'ati commented during his post-prison period, 'as one's psychological disposition varies, one's perspectives undergoes changes as well'.⁹⁹ Whatever the answers may be, like many aspects of Shari'ati's life, *Horr* will remain an enigma, since it stands out as an exceptional work among his mainly revisionist writings, characteristic of a tired intellectual reformist, trying to make peace with his environment.

Hejira and Death

As the walls began to close in on him from all sides, Shari'ati became convinced that he could no longer live in Iran. Pressure was building up from all sides. His life of effective retirement at home depressed him. The gracious financial help of his friends embarrassed him and hurt his pride beyond imagination.¹⁰⁰ Unable to write, speak, teach, research, think, and lead, life had become an intolerable nightmare.¹⁰¹ Frustrated by the inability to provide the 'besieged, starving' and struggling Islamic forces on the verge of 'annihilation' with intellectual 'provisions and weapons', Shari'ati whined in pain and shame.¹⁰² SAVAK not only summoned him regularly, but also increased the pressure on him. On one occasion, he was informed that he had to write a commentary on the Mojahedin's manifesto on their ideological shift. On another, SAVAK strongly recommended that Shari'ati should

join a newly established research institute headed by Naraqi.¹⁰³ Minachi recalls that, loathing the prospect of writing a commentary for SAVAK and anxious about the motives behind its job proposal, Shari'ati became dispirited and plunged into depression.

In the absence of any joy or hope in Iran, and convinced that his presence could not be of any use, around February 1977 Shari'ati thought of going abroad. He discussed the idea with a handful of close friends. Planning for the future, Shari'ati and Minachi considered the overseas transfer and continuation of their experience at Ershad. Shari'ati preferred to establish the 'New Ershad' in Paris, with which he was more familiar, nevertheless he finally conceded to Minachi's insistence on London as its location.¹⁰⁴ Once the objective of his *hejira* or exodus was identified, the means of effecting it had to be explored. Shari'ati and his friends knew that he was banned from leaving the country. One option was to get out clandestinely. The other was to find out if the authorities had also banned him under his real surname, Mazinani. If SAVAK had placed the name of Ali Shari'ati on the list of those forbidden to leave the country, then Ali Mazinani could apply for his passport and obtain his freedom 'legally'. The fact that Ehsan had legally left the country under the name of Mazinani encouraged family and friends that Ali may also be able to follow the same route. Work, however, began on both fronts.

On the clandestine front the escape was minutely planned and it was decided that Shari'ati would first go to Mashhad, something that he often did and would therefore raise no suspicions. Having stayed with his father and visited friends, he would disguise himself in the local Zaboli attire and cross the border into Afghanistan. From Afghanistan he would cross into Pakistan, from where he would go to Europe. In the process of finding a legal way to get Shari'ati out of the country, four people were directly involved.¹⁰⁵ The key person was a police officer in the passport office who was highly trusted by Abolfazl Hakimi and Taqi Dadsetan. The two men, both Shari'ati's old friends, were informed of his intentions and had recommended discussing his plan with this person. The officer, also known to Shari'ati, was a follower of his who frequented Ershad, had studied most of Shari'ati's published works and was a firm believer his Islamic ideology. Having obtained Shari'ati's permission to discuss the situation with the officer, Dadsetan learnt that a passport could be readily obtained under the name of Mazinani in only a few days. He had assured Dadsetan that neither the passport application nor the issue of the document would cause any alarm; SAVAK would not catch on to what was going on. The fourth person involved was Puran Shari'ati. She was responsible for preparing all the relevant documents, depositing Shari'ati's application form at the passport office and picking up his passport after it was issued.

During the first week of May 1977, after Puran delivered Shari'ati's application form, Shari'ati left for Mashhad. According to their plan, Puran was to pick up his passport on the following Wednesday. If the application was refused, the contingency plan of an escape through the Afghan border would be put into operation. If, however, she was given the passport, she was to phone Mashhad and inform

Shari'ati that Mona, their youngest child, was ill and that he should return to Tehran. At Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati's house in Mashhad, Sarjam'i recalled that Shari'ati pulled him to a corner and asked him to look after his father, since he planned to leave the country. Asked about how he was planning to leave, Shari'ati told him that dressed as a Zaboli, he was crossing the border into Afghanistan. While in Mashhad, Shari'ati went to visit Imam Reza's shrine and asked the Imam to 'free him from the prison he was in'. He also visited his mother's tomb and prayed for her.¹⁰⁶ Sarjam'i recalled that everything was prepared for his clandestine trip when Puran called from Tehran, giving him the coded message that she had obtained his passport.¹⁰⁷ Shari'ati flew to Tehran on Thursday. Pressed to leave Iran, the extremely jovial couple purchased a ticket for Ali on Sabena's Monday morning flight to Brussels – for Belgium did not require a visa from Iranians and was not much frequented by them. Until the day of departure Ali and Puran were filled with an intense feeling of delight and anxiety, hope and disquiet. The danger of SAVAK discovering Ali's plans loomed and distressed the couple.

Early in the morning of 16 May 1977, Ali hugged and kissed his daughters goodbye, said his farewell to his friend Khosrow Mansurian and accompanied by Puran was driven to the airport by a friend, Abdollah Radnia.¹⁰⁸ Worried about being identified at the last minute, Shari'ati wore a hat and a large pair of glasses. At the time, travellers were obliged to give their passports to the airline they were travelling with three days before departure. The passports were again checked by SAVAK and returned to travellers before checking in. The minutes before Sabena's travellers were finally called to the departure lounge must have seemed like leap years for Shari'ati, who was naturally impatient and nervous. Having bid Puran farewell, he walked straight to the passport office. There he asked for Ali Mazinani's passport. Gazing at the pigeonhole with the letter M written above it, Shari'ati's heartbeat must have accelerated while the officer looked for, found and handed over his passport. Having boarded the plane, the Sabena flight was delayed for a couple of hours before the hostess informed them that the plane would take off in fifteen minutes. Soon, Shari'ati's dream of leaving the prison he was in came true. Imam Reza had granted his wish.

While Shari'ati flew joyfully to freedom, SAVAK was undoubtedly unaware of the fact that, as the Persian proverb goes, 'the bird had skipped the cage'. It was completely in the dark both over his application for a passport and his final departure. Immediately afterwards, however, its suspicions were aroused. Within two days Sabeti sent an important memo to Khorasan's SAVAK, requesting that office to find and report Shari'ati's whereabouts in Khorasan and prevent his possible departure to a neighbouring country by land. In his memo Sabeti acknowledged that, while some reports maintained that Shari'ati was still in Khorasan, another indicated that he may have secretly left the country.¹⁰⁹ SAVAK knew that he could not have legally left the country under the name of Ali Shari'ati, since it appeared on the list of people forbidden to leave the country. Without a convincing response from Shari'ati's family or tangible reports from their own operatives on his

whereabouts, SAVAK began checking all possible leads. On 6 June, or some twenty days after Shari'ati's departure, it officially requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to check whether someone under the name of Mohammad-Ali Mazinani had left Iran on 17 May 1977.¹¹⁰ The fact that, after some three weeks, SAVAK was still mistaken about both the date and the name with which Shari'ati had left the country demonstrates the extent of its bungling and mismanagement. Incidentally, it was on this same day that it added the name of Puran Shari'ati to the list of those forbidden to leave the country. Once SAVAK received the list of travellers during the relevant period it verified that Shari'ati had fled under the name of Mazinani. On 8 June, it issued a circular to its agents abroad, informing them that Shari'ati, 'an active subversive religious element' who had been 'under arrest for some time' had illegally fled the country. The circular requested that he be located and placed under close surveillance. SAVAK continued to erroneously refer to the name with which Shari'ati had left the country as Mohammad-Ali.¹¹¹ Finally, some five weeks after Shari'ati's departure, SAVAK officially reported that Dr Ali Shari'ati remained on the list of people forbidden to leave the country and had not left. Ali Mazinani, however, had applied and received a passport and had left the country on 16 May 1977 through Mehrabad airport.¹¹²

Before his departure, Ali had planned his trip to the last detail with Minachi. Once in Europe, Ali was to go first to London, contact Minachi's children, who were in Newcastle, and immediately join them. Upon Ali's arrival at the home of Minachi's children, Minachi himself would join him and they would prepare for the launching of the 'New Ershad'.¹¹³ Worried that he might be arrested at the airport, Shari'ati wrote the phone number of Minachi's children on a cigarette. He had planned to light the cigarette and destroy the phone number if he was caught and rewrite the number properly on a sheet of paper if he could board the plane and leave.¹¹⁴ Once on the plane Shari'ati copied the number and smoked away the cigarette with the phone number on it. In Brussels, his first stop, he stayed at Hotel International on rue Royale for a couple of days. From here, he wrote to his father to assure him of his well-being, and to Ehsan explaining his presence in Brussels and asking about the possibility of getting a US visa to visit him.¹¹⁵

Once in London, he called Minachi's children.¹¹⁶ An English woman answered, patiently explaining that Shari'ati had dialed the wrong number. Shari'ati tried again several times but failed. Unaware of the fact that the Minachis were in Newcastle, he travelled to Leeds, which matched the city code of the phone number that he had copied from his cigarette. There, he tried again in vain to locate them and finally realized that he must have copied the number from his cigarette incorrectly. Lost in England and with no place to go, Shari'ati looked for Ali Fokuhi, Puran's cousin, who was studying at the University of Southampton. Finally, he found him through the University, explained his predicament, and accepted Fokuhi's invitation to go to his house. He took the train back to London, where Fokuhi joined him and accompanied him to Southampton. Ali Fokuhi and his sister received Shari'ati with hospitality and enthusiasm. Shari'ati chose to live in

their small and rather uncomfortable attic, where his most important utensil was a vacuum flask full of dark tea. The ceiling of his room was so low that having climbed the multitude of stairs to it he was liable to hit the ceiling.

After just over a week, Shari'ati bought a car and decided to travel to France. Boarding the ferry at Southampton he disembarked at Le Havre and drove to Paris. From Paris he went south to Aix-en-Provence, where Hassan Habibi lived. At mid-night, Shari'ati arrived at Hassan Habibi's house and worried about waking up the family, slipped a note under the door of their apartment. Instantly, Mrs Habibi opened the door and invited Ali in with great hospitality, joyfully telling him that on the previous night Hassan had dreamt that he would be coming to visit them. Shari'ati stayed with the Habibi's for over a week. They discussed the political situation in Iran, the role of the Islamic forces and its future, the alignment of forces within the student movement abroad and the events at Ershad.¹¹⁷ As the date of Puran and the children's arrival to England was approaching and Shari'ati had to cross France from the south to the north-west, he decided to head back to England. Before his return, Qotbzadeh, one of the leaders of the Islamic student movement in Europe, also paid him a visit at Habibi's home. Very early in the morning of June 15, Shari'ati boarded the ferry for Southampton. On his arrival, Shari'ati tried to dissimulate his place of residence by telling the immigration officer that he would be staying at a hotel. Unable to prove his ability to financially support himself, he was taken into custody. Finally through Fokuhi's mediation, who had rushed to the scene once he was informed of the situation, Shari'ati was freed.¹¹⁸

This incident only added to Shari'ati's sense of unease. Distressed and perturbed about all the things that could go wrong with Puran and the children's departure from Iran, he was once again plunged into a state of angst. The only thing that brought him joy and eased his anxiety was the receipt of Ehsan's letter of 8 June, the poetic style and eclectic content of which probably reassured Ali that his son could follow in his footsteps. On 17 June, Minachi, who had flown to London with Shari'ati's academic degrees and all the documents he thought might be of use to him, arrived in Southampton. He found Shari'ati pacing the side-walk of Fokuhi's house smoking away at his cigarette. The two men had a lot to say to one another. They talked until early morning. Shari'ati spoke with remorse about his disorientation and uprooting from his own environment. 'How can I think and write about Abu Zarr and the desert, when I am confronted daily with my green and flowery surroundings,' he complained to Minachi. He also spoke about Ehsan's letter and his sense of elation and pride. The two men also discussed the launching of the 'New Ershad' and its statute.¹¹⁹

After a few hours of sleep, as Shari'ati was preparing to welcome his wife and children at Heathrow airport, Puran called from Tehran. Her voice broken by tears, she told him that the authorities had prevented Mona and her from leaving the country. Susan and Sara were, however, on their way. It seemed that Ali's worst nightmare had come true. One can only speculate about what went on in his mind.

A similar bitter experience must have immediately dawned on him. When SAVAK arrested his father and brother-in-law as hostages to coerce him into surrendering himself, the plot proved to be effective. His prison and close contact with SAVAK's key figures had given him an insight into what they were capable of when they wanted something desperately. This time, Shari'ati had no reason to doubt that the authorities would exert as much pressure as possible on his wife, who remained trapped in Iran, to get him back. The agonizing and awesome thought of Puran under pressure in the Komiteh prison and the probability of his own return to the same prison must have caused him added anxiety and distress.

On 18 June 1977, Shari'ati accompanied by Minachi and Fokuhi went to terminal three at Heathrow. After waiting a while, and worrying once again, this time about his children's excessive delay in getting through immigration and customs, Susan and Sara appeared. They were saddened by their forced separation from their mother and younger sister and Shari'ati tried hard to comfort them. In Southampton, he had rented a house for his family. On their way there, they dropped Minachi off in London. Before getting out of Fokuhi's car, Minachi suggested that they should all see the film on the Prophet Mohammad which had just come to the screens in London. Shari'ati liked the idea. They promised to see one another the next day. On their return to Southampton, they all went to their newly-rented house.¹²⁰ That night, after dinner, Ali and Nahid Fokuhi returned to their own home while Shari'ati, his daughters and Nasrin Fokuhi went to bed. Unable to get any rest, Shari'ati, who had gone to sleep on the ground floor asked Sara for a glass of water. After a short while, still unable to sleep he called on Susan and Sara once again asking for a cup of tea. Having tended to their father, the girls went upstairs to sleep. At eight the next morning, the Fokuhi's came to pick up Nasrin, their sister. Nasrin, who had heard the door bell, went downstairs to open the door. At the entrance of Shari'ati's room, she found him lying on his back, on the floor. Overcome by the psychological stress of the last month of his life, his heart had stopped beating. The coroner's report issued on 21 June 1977 identified "cardiac failure" as the cause of his sudden death.¹²¹ Informed of the tragedy on the same day, Minachi, Ettehad and one Hossein Haj Farraj-e Dabbagh, later known as Soroush, rushed to Southampton.

On 26 June 1977, Shari'ati's body was flown to Damascus, where he was buried close to the shrine of Zeinab, Imam Hossein's sister and a religious character with whom Shari'ati greatly identified. In one of his most bold, passionate and defiant speeches, 'After martyrdom', glorifying the executed members of the Marxist Fada'ian, Shari'ati had argued that every revolution had two aspects; blood and the message. Imam Hossein was the symbol of martyrdom and blood, while the grave responsibility of communicating and disseminating Hossein's revolutionary message after his martyrdom was left to Zeinab. Without the preacher of the message and the storyteller, history would have forgotten the blood and the sacrifice.

Epilogue

Shari'ati was a man of his times. He reflected the mood, conditions, problems, pains and conceivable solutions of his time. The extent to which his discourse and his politico-religious solutions remain pertinent today depends on the degree to which times have changed the material and mental conditions of the people, the institutions governing them and the international balance of forces. Shari'ati's methodology played a crucial role in his discourse. In the philosophical tradition of Manichaeans, Shari'ati had a binary vision, through which he analysed all topics. All concepts, objects, words and phenomenon, with the exception of the Creator and Shari'ati's role-models, had a bifurcated and contradictory existence. An evil and satanic aspect confronted and challenged the coexisting good and divine. Shari'ati was a 'natural' dialectician. His analysis of the dichotomy within the individual, society, polity, economy, history, religion, and Shi'ism in particular, is the result of this methodological application.

There is at least one line or one work in the multitude of the works of every intellectual, which personifies or symbolizes that individual. Shari'ati's catchy and fiery political slogans, chanted by hundreds of thousands of people during the Iranian revolution of 1978, will probably symbolize him in the minds of those who remember those days or write and read about them. To those familiar with the Shi'i culture, and passionately concerned with the fate of their fellow beings in a world of inequality and oppression, Shari'ati will probably be remembered by the many lines that conveyed the message; 'those who die perform a Hossein-like act and those who live should do as Zeinab did or else they would be akin to Yazid.'

But there is more to Shari'ati than his political dimension. Different people can relate to his different worlds and different lines of his works can come to symbolize different facets of the man. Certainly one of the most distinguished intellectuals of twentieth century Iran, Shari'ati represented a special and unique amalgam. He does not fit into any classical stereotype. Those who try to portray him as such, simply deform the man. He was an outstanding storyteller, a master of enigma, riddles and charades. Whatever he wrote, whatever he said and whatever he did which excited and roused him, was filled with riddles and puzzles. Such was his life. A true product of the fertile cultural soil of Khorasan, the land of epics and mystics, Ali Shari'ati was at ease with words, the principle tool of his forefathers. He was in love with the beauty and music of the composition of words. He was an adept social psychologist of his people, correctly gauging the needs of his audience. His story was a tale they longed for. He had the audacity, the enchanting words and the shrewd intellect of saying it well without *saying it*. Shari'ati was endowed with all it took to possess real charisma and perhaps even something more. He was more than a bit of a poet, a novelist, a satirist, an artist and a journalist. Detesting confined circumferences and rigid frameworks, in whatever domain, he was cosmopolitan and broad-minded.

For Shari'ati, phenomena and outcomes did not have a single and simple cause.

He was a master synthesizer and himself a synthesis. A first class eclectic, he was part Muslim, part Christian, part Jew, part Buddhist, part Mazdaki, part Sufi, part heretic, part Marxist, part existentialist, part humanist and part sceptic. Shari'ati was perfectly at ease being a nationalist and internationalist at the same time, a materialist as well as an idealist and a practising spiritualist. Shari'ati was an individualist at war with individualism and a militant of social causes, ever evading the masses. A firm believer in the inevitability of change and the necessity of adaptation, he was a modernist who usually detested the persistence of outmoded traditions, customs and institutions. His role-models, heroes, references and loved ones represented the broadest variety. They came from different epochs, disciplines, ideologies, lineages, religions, professions, colours, cultures and nationalities. An intellectual product of the world he lived in, he was a synthesis of the cultural and political traditions of the east and the west. A westerner in appearance, education and methodology, he sought refuge in his eastern, Persian and Shi'i culture, his perception of which was coloured by his western education. He looked at the east through western eyes and at the west through eastern eyes. Shari'ati upheld his Islam with reference to non-Muslim sources and his Shi'ism with reference to non-Shi'i sources. He was a rebel against himself, his society, his religion, his past and his present. An iconoclast and a utopian, Shari'ati was at war with 'what was' and sought to create 'what ought to be'.

Most of all, in his own imagery, Shari'ati was the unexpected rooster who took pride and pleasure in his own nocturnal crowing, shattering the deep silence of the night and upsetting the sleeping. He woke up all kinds of creatures, good and evil, the people and the enemies of the people. He woke up the inquisitive, the inquisitors and the executioners. Each crow added to his disciples and to his enemies. Inviting danger, he always tried to out-manoeuvre the enemy; and when he was out-witted, he retreated into himself, sometimes became remorseful and always paid by long bouts of depression and soul-searching, often resulting in revisionism.

In Islam, he found the language and beliefs of the people who he tried to reach through their religion. His mission was to revolutionize and modernize the understanding and interpretation of Islam. His nimble mastery of words and his artful associations created an Islamic simulacrum far more attractive to his audience than the original. He was probably the only twentieth-century Iranian intellectual who created a socio-political momentum which gave birth to a social movement, culminating in a revolution. In the ultimate social revolution he saw the end of all injustice, oppression and inequality; the birth of the 'perfect' New Man. The revolution, he believed, would end the dualities and the binary system. It would usher in a personal, social, political, economic and religious monotheism, imposing the will of the good and divine over the evil and satanic. Shari'ati was a romantic and not a practitioner of revolutions. A firm believer in platonic relations, he did not, perhaps, want to lose the immaculate vision that he held of the revolution. The utopian idea was too good to be put to test.

Notes

Chapter One

1. Fatemi (n.d.) p.355.
2. Aqeli (1369) pp.130-1.
3. Fatemi (n.d.) p.354.
4. Aqeli (1369) p.131.
5. Ibid.
6. Fatemi (n.d.) pp.356-7.
7. Ibid., p.357.
8. Aqeli (1369) p.141.
9. Ibid.
10. Fatemi (n.d.) pp.393-4.
11. Aqeli (1369) p.141.
12. Ibid., p.142.
13. Ibid., p.143.
14. Akhavi (1980) p.44.
15. Ibid., p.45.
16. Ibid., p.56.
17. Aqeli (1369) p.164.
18. Akhavi (1980) p.39.
19. Aqeli (1369) p.154.
20. Ibid.
21. Fatemi (n.d.) p.610.
22. Jami (1371) p.149.
23. Khome'i (1363) p.17.
24. Jami (1371) p.152.
25. Ibid., p.151.
26. Kasravi (1989) p.182.
27. Ibid., p.180.
28. Kasravi, 1348, pp.4-5.
29. Ibid., p.8.
30. Kasravi (1989) p.155.

31. Ibid., pp.163-5.
32. Ibid., p.155.
33. Kasravi (1990) pp.83-5.
34. Kasravi (1989) pp.136, 160.
35. Ibid., p.177.
36. Ibid., 1989, p.164.
37. Ibid., pp.126-7.
38. Ibid., 1989, pp.126-7, 142, 149, 168-71.
39. Ibid., pp.148, 228.
40. Pajum (1370) p.264.
41. Ibid., p.264.
42. Shari'ati, C.W.35, pp.557-8.
43. Shari'ati, C.W.20, pp.273, 513, 521.
44. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris 1993.
45. Eslami (n.d.) *Rowhaniyat*, p.27.

Chapter Two

1. Pajum (1370) p.99.
2. *Kayhan-e Farhangi*, Bahman 1363.
3. Pajum (1370) pp.36-7, 53.
4. Ibid., p.37.
5. Ibid., p.264.
6. Pajum, (1370), pp.265-6.
7. Ibid., pp.244, 269.
8. Ibid., p.90.
9. Ibid., p.91.
10. Momken, interview, Paris, 1990.
11. Pajum, 1370, p.260.
12. Momken, interview, Paris, 1992.

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8. Ibid., p.90.
9. Ibid., p.91.
10. Momken, interview, Paris, 1990.
11. Pajum, 1370, p.260.
12. Momken, interview, Paris, 1992.

13. *Karnameh-e Kanun-e Nashr-e Haqayeq-e Eslami*, Mashhad, vol.1, Esfand 1326, p.14; Pajum (1370) pp.40, 53.
14. Momken, interview, Paris, 1990.
15. Shari'ati, C.W.10, p.34.
16. *Karnameh-e Kanun-e Nashr-e Haqayeq-e Eslami*, vol.1, p.7.
17. Ibid., pp.9-11.
18. Ibid., pp.7-8.
19. Ibid., pp.15-17.
20. Ibid., p.18.
21. *Kayhan-e Farhangi*, Bahman 1363.
22. Pajum (1370) p.262.
23. Ibid., pp.266-8.
24. Ibid.
25. *Kayhan-e Farhangi*, Bahman 1363.
26. Ibid.
27. Momken, interview, Paris, 1990.
28. Shari'ati, C.W.10, pp.34-5.
29. Pajum (1370) p.280.
30. Qazi, interview, 1994.
31. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1991; Momken, interview, Paris, 1990.
32. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1991.
33. Pajum (1370) pp.266-8.
34. Ibid., p.272.
35. Ibid., pp.280-1.
36. Ibid., p.274.
37. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1993.
38. Pajum (1370) pp.277-8.
39. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1993.
40. Ibid.
41. Cottam (1979) p.276.
42. Nejati (1364) p.243.
43. Pajum (1370) p.284.
44. Nejati (1371) p.102.
45. Pajum (1370) p.289.
46. Nejati (1371) p.126.
47. Pajum (1370) p.93.

Chapter Three

1. Members of this circle formed at Dar al-Fonun, which later evolved into the MGWS, included Mohammad

- Nakhshab, Gholam-Ali Sayyar, Ja'far Nadim, Nasir Asar, Ja'far Shahidi, Ahmad Shahidi, Asadollah Razaqi, Hadi H., Hossein Davudi, Zeineddin Ha'eri, Bozorg-e Ha'eri and Jamaledin Ha'eri.
2. Nasir Asar, interview, Paris 1993.
3. Hadi H., interview, Paris 1993.
4. Nasir Asar, interview, Paris 1993.
5. Unless indicated the information used in this section is based on Razi, interview, Tehran, 1992.
6. Habibi in *Dovomin Salgard-e Doctor Kazem-e Sami*, 1369, p.83 NB.
7. Ibid., pp.84-6.
8. Ibid., p.86.
9. Shakibnia, interview, Tehran, 1992.
10. Yazdi in *Sevomin Salgard-e Doctor Kazem-e Sami*, p.89 NB.
11. Razi, interview, Tehran, 1992.
12. Yazdi in *Sevomin Salgard-e Doctor Sami*, pp.94-5.
13. Razi, interview, Tehran, 1993.
14. Razi, interview, Tehran, 1992.
15. *Mardom-e Iran*. Organ-e Markazi-ye Jamiyat-e Azadi-ye Mardom-e Iran. 2nd year, no.13, 12 Esfand, 1331.
16. Ibid.
17. Shari'atmadari, A. in *Tarikh va Farhang-e Mo'aser*, no.8, Winter 1372, p.125.
18. Nikuruh in *Dovomin Salgard-e Doctor Sami*, p.117 NB.
19. *Mardom-e Iran*, 2nd year, no.11. 27 Bahman 1331. All articles of the League's Constitution are taken from this source.
20. *Nameh-e Forugh-e Elm*, vols 7, 8, 9. Mehr, Aban, Azar 1329. All in one issue. pp.43-7.
21. Ibid., p.44.
22. Ibid., pp.45-7.
23. *Ganj-e Shayegan*, vol.1, Khordad 1332, pp.3-8, 22-31.
24. Ibid., p.6.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., vol.2, Tir 1332, p.8.

27. Ibid., vol.1, Khordad 1332. p.23.
28. Ibid., pp.23-30.
29. Ibid., vol.3, Mordad 1332, p.34.
30. Ibid., vol.4, Special edition, Shahrivar, 1332.
31. According to Katouzian the articles in which Maleki formulated his 'Third Force Theory', appeared in 1951 and early 1952, whereas Shakibnia's first article appeared in 1950. See Katouzian (1990) pp.100 and 279.
32. *Mardom-e Iran*, 2nd year, nos 22. 30 Farvardin 1332.
33. Ibid., nos 20, 22 Farvardin 1332.
34. Ibid., no.29, 18 Khordad 1332.
35. Ibid., no.29, 18 Khordad 1332.
36. Ibid., nos 25 & 32, Ordibehesht & Tir 1332.

Chapter Four

1. Unpublished manuscript by Sheikh Abdolkarim Shari'ati, 'Dr Shari'ati in the mirror of his virtuous characteristics'. A copy of this manuscript was kindly given to me by Sara Shari'ati. p.12.
2. Akbar Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
3. 'Dr Shari'ati in the mirror of his virtuous characteristics', p.11.
4. Akbar Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
5. Sarjam'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
6. Shari'ati, C.W.33, Part 2. p.708.
7. Ibid.
8. 'Dr Shari'ati in the mirror'. p.10.
9. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.255.
10. Unpublished memoirs of Gholam-Hossein Daneshlab on Ali Shari'ati. A copy of his memoirs was kindly given to me by Sara Shari'ati.
11. Momken, interview, Paris, 1992.
12. Ibid.
13. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.6.
14. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.6.
15. Ibid.
16. Momken, interview, Paris, 1992.
17. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.245.
18. Momken, interview, Paris, 1995.
19. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.7.
20. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
21. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.6.
22. Ibid., p.76.
23. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.76.
24. Khatib, interview, Tehran, 1995.
25. Sa'idi, J. (1370), p.92
26. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.325.
27. Ibid.
28. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.7.
29. Ibid., pp.76-7.
30. Shari'ati, C.W.33, Part 1. pp.76-7.
31. Ibid., p.78.
32. Khatib and Delasa'i, interview, Tehran and Mashhad respectively, 1995.
33. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.237.
34. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
35. Sarjam'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
36. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
37. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
38. Rowhani (1372) p.158.
39. Unless indicated, the information on the Teachers' Training College and Ali's experiences there are based on an interview with Akbar-e Safavieh, Mashhad, 1995.
40. Daneshlab on Ali Shari'ati, unpublished.
41. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
42. Ibid.
43. Khatib, interview, Tehran, 1995.
44. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
45. Khatib, interview, Tehran, 1995.
46. Daneshlab on Ali Shari'ati, unpublished.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. From Shari'ati's interrogations in Rowhani (1372) p.159.
50. Daneshlab on Ali Shari'ati.
51. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
52. In an unpublished anthology edited

by Ali Shari'ati Mazinani, dedicated to Delasa'i. Dr Delasa'i kindly allowed me to study and take notes from the notebook.

53. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
54. Delasa'i and Sarjame'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
55. A copy of Shari'ati's official high school exam results was kindly given to me by Sara Shari'ati.
56. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
57. Delasa'i and Sarjame'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
58. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.53.
59. Ibid., p.9.
60. Ibid., p.53.
61. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.53.
62. Ibid., vol.2, p.1018.
63. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1076.
64. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.70.
65. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.940.
66. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.76.
67. Ibid., pp.80-1.
68. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.481.
69. Ibid.
70. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.483.
71. Ibid., vol.2, p.689.
72. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.467.
73. Ibid., vol.1, p.7.
74. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
75. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.293; C.W.1, p.99.
76. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, pp.8 and 187.
77. Ibid., p.187.
78. Shari'ati, C.W.1, p.99.
79. *Khorasan*, no.1668, 25 Farvardin 1334. A portrait of Maeterlink drawn by Shari'ati accompanies the article.
80. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.8.
81. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.293.
82. *Khorasan*, no.1707, 12 Khordad 1334.
83. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.69, C.W.33, vol.1, p.8.
84. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.8.
85. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1994.
86. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.9.
87. Ibid.
88. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.54.

89. Unpublished anthology edited by Ali Shari'ati Mazinani, dedicated to Delasa'i.

Chapter Five

1. Shari'ati, C.W.vol.1, p.9.
2. Ibid., p.54.
3. Ibid., p.54.
4. Ahmadzadeh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
5. Ibid.
6. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
7. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995. Momken, interview, Paris 1991. Harati, interview, Tehran, 1994.
8. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995. Ahmadzadeh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
9. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
10. Qazi, interview, Paris, 1994.
11. Mozaffari, interview, Paris, 1992.
12. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
13. Ibid.
14. Sarjam'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Qahari, interview, Tehran, 1994.
18. See chapter three.
19. The information in this section is based on Qahari, interview, Tehran, 1994.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. *Mardom-e Iran*, no.11, 27 Bahman 1331.
25. Qahari, interview, Tehran, 1994.
26. Ibid.
27. *Mardom-e Iran*, nos. 22, 29.
28. Ibid., no.32.
29. Ibid., no.22, 30 Farvardin 1332.
30. Farsi (1373) p.14.
31. Qazi, interview, Paris, 1994.
32. Ibid.

33. Qahari, interview, Tehran, 1994.
34. Ahmadzadeh, interview, Mashhad, 1994.
35. Farsi (1373) p.20.
36. Ibid., p.17.
37. Ibid.
38. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1994.
39. Ahmadzadeh, interview, Mashhad, 1994.
40. Tabandeh, interview, Tehran, 1994.
41. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
42. Ibid.
43. Qazi, interview, Paris, 1994.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Hejazi in J. Sa'idi (1370) p.154.
47. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.80.
48. Ibid., p.76.
49. Ibid., pp.80-1.
50. Ibid., p.79.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., pp.79-80.
53. Ahmadzadeh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
54. Fazlinejad, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
55. Shari'ati, C.W.3, p.7.
56. Fazlinejad, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
57. Ibid.
58. Shari'ati, C.W.3, pp.18-25.
59. Ibid., pp.19-20.
60. 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, Text, Translation and Commentary, *The Holy Qur'an*, Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989, *al-Tawbah*, 34-34, pp.447-8.
61. Shari'ati, C.W.3, p.166.
62. Ibid., p.58.
63. Ibid., p.19.
64. Ibid., pp.20-2.
65. Shari'ati, C.W.20, p.249.
66. Shari'ati, C.W.1, p.146.
67. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.25.
68. *Nehzat-e Azadi-ye Iran* (1356), pp.101, 107.
69. Shari'ati, C.W.3, p.112; *Nehzat-e Azadi-ye Iran* (1356), p.75.
70. Shari'ati, C.W.31, pp.464, 466.
71. Ibid., p.464.

72. Ibid., pp.503, 465.
73. Ibid., p.510.
74. Ibid., p.492.
75. Ibid., p.492.
76. Ibid., p.473.
77. Ibid., 31, p.510.
78. Tabandeh, interview, Tehran, 1994.
79. *Khorasan*, 2 Azar, 1333.
80. Ibid., nos 1554, 1559, 1565, 1571, 1577, 1583, 1589, 1595, 1601, 1611.
81. Ibid., no.1554, 2 Azar, 1333.
82. Ibid., no.1559, 8 Azar, 1333.
83. Ibid., no.1559, 8 Azar, 1333.
84. Ibid., nos 1565, 1571 and 1577 respectively; Azar 15, 22 and 29, 1333.
85. Ibid., nos 1583, 1589 and 1595, respectively; Dey, 6, 13 and 20, 1333.
86. Ibid., no.1601, 27 Dey, 1333. Ibn Khalkan was a 13th-century judge, jurist and historian said to have been born in Balkh. His book, *Vafiyat al-ayan*, is a historical account of the lives of scientists and politicians whom he had known or heard of. However, the famous Introduction to history which Shari'ati refers to, and which has been widely acclaimed as a pioneering work in scientific historical analysis, is the *Muqadameh* of Ibn Khaldun not Ibn Khalkan. See *The Great Islamic Encyclopedia*, Kazem Musavi Bojnurdi (ed.), vol.3, Tehran: The Centre of Great Islamic Encyclopedia, 1990. pp.450-8 and 459-62.
87. Shari'ati, C.W.31, p.7.
88. Ibid., p.7.
89. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1993.
90. Fazlinejad, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Farsi (1373) p.17.
94. *Ganj-e Shayegan*, vol.1, Khordad 1332, pp.3-8.
95. Ibid., p.22.
96. Shakibnia, interview, Tehran, 1992.

97. *Khorasan*, 6 Esfand, 1333.
98. *Ibid.*, 13 Esfand, 1333.
99. *Ibid.*, 13 Esfand, 1333.
100. *Ibid.*, 20 Esfand, 1333.
101. *Ibid.*, 25 Farvardin 1334.
102. *Ibid.*, 1 Ordibehesht, 1334.
103. His first name is misspelt in the *Khorasan* article (13 Khordad 1334).
104. *Ibid.*, 1707.
105. *Forugh-e Elm*, Year 1. nos 7, 8, 9, Mehr, Aban, Azar; *Ganj-e Shayegan*, no.1, Khordad 1332.
106. *Ganj-e Shayegan*, Year 1. no.2, Tir 1332, p.26.
107. Delasa'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
108. Farsi (1373) p.155.
109. *Ibid.*, p.155.
110. Letter dated 34/3/9 in Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.303.
111. *Khorasan*, 1726, 4 Tir 1334.
112. *Ibid.*
113. *Ibid.*, 1758, 12 Mordad, 1334.
114. *Ibid.*, 1748, 30 Tir 1334.
115. *Ibid.*, 1747, 30 Tir 1334.
116. *Ibid.*, 1655, 1 Farvardin 1334.
117. *Ibid.*, 1756, 10 Mordad, 1334.
118. *Ibid.*, 1667, 24 Farvardin 1334.
119. *Ibid.*, 1655, 1 Farvardin 1334 and 1686, 15 Ordibehesht, 1334.
120. *Ibid.*, 1707, 12 Farvardin 1334.
121. *Ibid.*, 1853, 12 Azar, 1334.

Chapter Six

1. Mirzazadeh, interview, 1993, Paris.
2. Qara'i (1370) pp.58-9.
3. Puran Shari'ati, interview, Tehran, 1993.
4. A xeroxed copy of this handwritten letter in four pages was kindly given to me by a friend of Shari'ati who wishes to remain anonymous. Hereafter referred to as Shari'ati, 'Letter to My Dear Brothers', p.1.
5. *Ibid.*, p.2.
6. *Ibid.*, p.3.

7. *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.
8. *Ibid.*, p.4.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. Farsi (1373) p.154.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Rowhani (1372). This paragraph is based on the information in pages 164-5 of this book.
15. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
16. Razmju, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
17. Razmju, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
18. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
19. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
20. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1100.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. The information in most of this paragraph is based on Qara'i, interview, 1995.
24. Nateq, interview, Paris, 1992. Nateq met Shari'ati later in Paris.
25. Shari'ati in *Nashrieh-e Farhangi-ye Khorasan*, Year 2. no.6, Shahrivar 1337.
26. Sa'idi (1370) p.154.
27. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
28. *Ibid.*
29. McDonald (1987) p.24.
30. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*
34. Dadsetan, interview, Paris, 1995.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
38. *Ibid.*
39. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
40. Shafi'i Kadkani, interview, Tehran, 1995.
41. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1993.
42. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Aftab-e Sharq*, 2 Khordad 1336.

46. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.91.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Aftab-e Sharq*, 1 Tir 1337.
49. Dadsetan, interview, Paris, 1995.
50. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.91.
51. *Aftab-e Sharq*, 1 Tir 1337.
52. Shafi'i Kadkani, interview, Tehran, 1995.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*
55. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1993.
56. *Ibid.*
57. This account is based on Shafi'i Kadkani, interview, Tehran, 1995.
58. Mirzazadeh, interview, 1993.
59. Shafi'i-e Kadkani, interview, Tehran, 1995.
60. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
61. Shafi'i Kadkani, interview, Tehran, 1995.
62. Shari'ati, C.W.30 pp.68-70.
63. The comment was made to the mother of a younger friend of Shari'ati in Mashhad, who recounted it to his son.
64. Shari'ati in *Nashrieh-e Farhangi-ye Khorasan*, no.6, Shahrivar 1337.
65. *Ibid.*
66. Nejadi (1371) p.126.
67. Ahmadzadeh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*
70. Farsi, (1373) p.20.
71. *Kayhan*, 7 Mehr, 1336.
72. Omrani, M. in Ashkevari (1373) p.219.
73. Ahmadzadeh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Rowhani (1372) p.166.
76. *Ibid.*, p.147. Reference is made to document number 7 in the first volume of Shari'ati's file at SAVAK. Only twelve words are directly quoted from the full text of document seven.

77. Rowhani (1372) pp.147,166.
78. *Ibid.* p.662.
79. Shari'ati, C.W.32, p.284.
80. *Ibid.*, p.287.
81. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.92.
82. Akhavan, 'Bagh-e man', in (Qara'i)1370, p.271.
83. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.92.
84. *Ibid.*
85. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.93.
86. Qahari, interview, Tehran, 1995.
87. Puran Shari'at-Razavi, interview, Tehran, 1993. Information in this section is entirely based on Puran Shari'at-Razavi's recollections.
88. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
89. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
90. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
91. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
92. Puran Shari'at-Razavi, interview, Tehran, 1993.
93. Puran Shari'at-Razavi, interview, Tehran, 1993.
94. Momken, interview, Paris, 1993.
95. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995. The information in this section is based primarily on Qara'i's recollections.
96. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
97. *Ibid.*
98. *Ibid.*
99. *Ibid.*

Chapter Seven

1. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.55.
2. Marcel (1958) p.37.
3. Mozaffari, interview, Paris, 1992.
4. A letter to his wife in Shari'at-Razavi, (1374) p.61.
5. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.55.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p.56.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Alavi, interview, Mashhad, 1995 and in Shari'ati's interrogations; Rowhani

- (1372) p.168.
10. Based on a letter written on July 15 and 16 to Puran. A copy of the letter was kindly given to me by Sara Shari'ati.
 11. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.61.
 12. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.980.
 13. Shari'ati, C.W.8, p.5.
 14. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.56.
 15. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.67.
 16. Shari'ati, C.W.8, p.10.
 17. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.67.
 18. Based on a letter to his wife dated 20 Azar, 1338. A copy of the letter was kindly given to me by Sara Shari'ati.
 19. Ibid.
 20. Ibid.
 21. Ibid.
 22. Sarjam'i, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
 23. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.59.
 24. Ibid.
 25. Ibid., p.60.
 26. Ibid.
 27. Pakdaman, interview, Paris, 1994. The information about this encounter is based on Nasser Pakdaman's recollections.
 28. According to Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati, before Shari'ati left for Paris, at a meeting with Mehdi Bazargan, it was Bazargan who suggested that Ali Shari'ati should study Sociology in Europe, *Jahan-e Eslam, Vijeh Nameh-e Farhangi*, no.6. Khordad-Tir 1372, p.25.
 29. Mohammad-Taqi Shari'ati, in Sa'idi, (1370) p.98.
 30. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.462.
 31. Qara'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
 32. Rowhani (1372) p.167.
 33. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1065. Rue Lacroix is by no means very close to the Champs Elysée, but on the other hand, the the Champs Elysée is probably the closest commonly-known street or city landmark.
 34. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1066.
 35. Ibid.
 36. Ibid.
 37. A post card to Safavieh, dated 20 April 1960. Shari'ati's address at the time was 14 rue Lacroix Paris 17. Akbar Safavieh was kind enough to allow me to see the postcard and copy its contents.
 38. Ibid..
 39. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.66.
 40. Ibid.
 41. Ibid.
 42. Ibid.
 43. Hejazi, in Sa'idi, (1370) p.155.
 44. Nejati. Gh, vol.1, (1371) p.140.
 45. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.67.
 46. Amin, interview, Tehran, 1996.
 47. Amin, interview, Tehran, 1995.
 48. Baratali, interview, Tehran, 1993.
 49. Rowhani, (1372) p.167.
 50. The two sources of this information wish to remain anonymous.
 51. Rahnema. and Nomani (1990) pp.97-8.
 52. *Jahan-e Eslam, Vijeh Nameh-e Farhangi*, no.6. Khordad-Tir 1372, p.25.
 53. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.67.
 54. Oruji, interview, Paris, 1995.
 55. Varjavand, interview, Tehran, 1995.
 56. Ibid.
 57. Amin, interview, Tehran, 1995.
 58. Ibid.
 59. Ibid.
 60. *Nameh-e Parsi*, no.1, vol.1. Nasser Pakdaman was kind enough to provide me with the two issues of *Nameh-e Parsi*, referred to in this section.
 61. Pakdaman, interview, Paris, 1995.
 62. They include, Nasser Asar, Mehrdad Bahar, Hamid Enayat, Mostafa Farzaneh, Hossein Malek, Parviz Meraat, Nasser Pakdaman and Hushang Sa'edlou.
 63. *Nameh-e Parsi*, no.1, vol.2.
 64. *Yadnameh Shahid Javid, Ali Shari'ati*,

- ILL: *Nehzat-e Azadi-e Kharej az Keshvar*, Tir 1365, p.31. I have not been able to verify this claim through any independent source.
65. Qazi, interview, Paris, 1994. The information in this paragraph is based on Qazi's recollections.
 66. Harati, interview, Tehran, 1995.
 67. Showkat, H. (1994) vol.1, pp.410-25. This is an excellent compilation of documents on the Confederation of Iranian Students.
 68. Qazi, interview, Paris 1994. The information in this paragraph is based on Qazi's recollections.
 69. Qazi, interview, Paris 1994.
 70. Shakeri, interview, Paris 1992.
 71. Ibid.
 72. Shari'ati, C.W.26, pp.502-6.
 73. Ibid., p.521.
 74. Shari'ati, C.W.13, pp.171-2.

Chapter Eight

1. Yazdi, interview, Tehran, 1993. According to Ebrahim Yazdi, he was the recipient of the letters and circulars referred to in this paragraph. Parts of these letters have been published in, *Yadnameh-e Shahid Javid, Ali Shari'ati*, (1365), All references are to this volume.
2. Ibid., p.23.
3. Ibid., p.24.
4. Ibid., pp.24-5.
5. Ibid., p.25.
6. Nejati (1371) p.471.
7. Yazdi, interview, Tehran, 1993.
8. Amin, interview, Tehran, 1995. SAMA' is the acronym for Sazeman-e Makhshus-e Ettihad va Amal.
9. *Nashriyeh-e Sazeman-e Daneshjuyan-e Irani Moqim-e Faranseh vabasteh be Jebheh-e Melli-ye Iran*, no.2, Esfand 1340, March 1962.
10. *Andisheh-e Jebheh, Organ-e Jebheh-e Melli-ye Iran dar Amrika*, no.5 & 6, Zemestan-e 1342, 1964. Sham', 'Vasiyatnameh-e Frantz Fanon', p.5.
11. Harati, interview, Tehran, 1995.
12. *Nashriyeh-e Sazeman-e Daneshjuyan*, no.2, Esfand 1340, Mars 1962. pp.11-13.
13. Bani-Sadr, interview, Paris, 1995.
14. Ahmadzadeh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
15. *Nashriyeh-e Sazeman-e Daneshjuyan*, Shomareh Dovom, Esfand, 1340. Mars, 1962. p.5.
16. Harati, interview, Tehran, 1995.
17. Baratali, interview, Tehran, 1993.
18. *Iran-e Azad*, no.7, Farvardin 1342.
19. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.69.
20. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1080.
21. Ahmadzadeh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
22. *Yadnameh Shahid Javid, Ali Shari'ati*, p.18.
23. Ibid.
24. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1992. The information in this section is based on Mirzazadeh's recollections.
25. *Yadnameh Shahid Javid, Ali Shari'ati*, p.19.
26. Ibid., p.22.
27. Harati, interview, Tehran, 1995.
28. Varjavand, interview, Tehran, 1995.
29. Ibid.
30. Mozaffari, interview, Paris, 1996.
31. Shakeri, interview, Paris, 1992.
32. Ibid.
33. Varjavand, interview, Tehran, 1995.
34. *Iran-e Azad*, no.1, 15 November 1962. I am most grateful to Hassan Masali, who kindly provided me with a complete collection of *Iran-e Azad* from its inception to February 1965.
35. *Iran-e Azad*, no.1, 15 November 1962.
36. *Yadnameh Shahid Javid, Ali Shari'ati*, p.31.
37. Shakeri, interview, Paris 1995.
38. *Iran-e Azad*, Farvardin-e 1342.
39. Ibid.

40. *Mardom*, Dowreh-e Panjom, Shomareh Shastom, 1 Khordad 1342. 22 May, 1963.
41. *Iran-e Azad*, no.9, Khordad 1342.
42. Alavi, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
43. *Iran-e Azad*, no.10, Tir 1342. June, 1963. All references in this paragraph are to this article and this issue.
44. Shakeri, interview, Paris, 1993.
45. Masali, interview, Paris, 1993.
46. Shakeri, interview, Paris, 1993.
47. Masali, interview, Paris, 1993.
48. *Yadnameh Shahid Javid, Ali Shari'ati*, p.28.
49. Ibid.
50. Varjavand, interview, Tehran, 1995.
51. Shokat, (1994) vol.2, p.37.
52. Shakeri, interview, Paris, 1993.
53. Harati, interview, Tehran, 1995.
54. Amin, interview, Tehran, 1995.
55. Baratali, interview, Tehran, 1993.
56. Shakeri, interview, Paris 1993.
57. A copy of the original message was kindly given to me by Hassan Masali.
58. Ibid.
59. A copy of this letter, dated 19 Khordad 1342 and signed by Mosaddeq, was kindly given to me by Hassan Masali.
60. Varjavand, interview, Tehran, 1995.
61. Ibid.
62. Masali, interview, Paris, 1993. The information on the events in the International Relations Committee of the Confederation is based on Masali's recollections.
63. *Iran-e Azad*, no.3, 20 December 1962.
64. Ibid., no.4, 20 January 1963.
65. Ibid.
66. *Yadnameh Shahid Javid, Ali Shari'ati*, p.29.

Chapter Nine

1. Farsi, (1373) p.153.

2. Lazard, interview, Paris, 1993.
3. Lazard, interview, Paris, 1993.
4. Lazard, interview, Paris, 1993.
5. Lazard, interview, Paris, 1993.
6. Lazard, interview, Paris, 1993.
7. Library of the University of Paris, Panthéon. These de Doctorat d'Universite, Par: Mazinani-Shari'ati, Ali. Ref: W Univ.1963,33. All references to Shari'ati's thesis come from this source.
8. Lazard, interview, Paris, 1993.
9. A copy of Shari'ati's official doctorate diploma, no.A.634, issued by the University of Paris, was kindly given to me by Sara Shari'ati. All references to his diploma are based on this document.
10. Lazard, interview, Paris, 1993.
11. A copy of Shari'ati's official certification letter, no.2725 by the Iranian embassy was kindly given to me by Sara Shari'ati.
12. Shari'ati, C.W.4, p.136.
13. Alavi, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
14. Shari'ati, C.W.35, vol.1, p.317.
15. Shari'ati, C.W.35, vol.1, p.316.
16. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, pp.329. Even though Shari'ati refers to a book in French by the name of *Survivance en prison*, which gives an account of his dialogues with Guioz, published in Togo, the work and the character's name may be completely fictive.
17. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.3.
18. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.315.
19. Shari'ati, C.W.21, pp.6-7.
20. Massignon, interview, 1994.
21. Massignon, interview, 1994.
22. Destremau & Moncelon (1994) pp.402-4.
23. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.325.
24. Ibid., p.324.
25. Destremau & Moncelon (1994) p.58.
26. Shari'ati, C.W.13, pp.330, 333, 335.
27. Ibid., p.335.
28. Ibid., pp.329-30.
29. Shari'ati, C.W.29, p.7.
30. Shari'ati, C.W.16, p.360.
31. Shari'ati, C.W.29, p.28.
32. Ibid., p.27.
33. Shari'ati, C.W.30, pp.573-4.
34. Bani-Sadr, interview, Paris, 1995.
35. Shari'ati, C.W.13, pp.320-1.
36. Shari'ati, C.W.4, pp.249-50.
37. Shari'ati, C.W.1, p.13.
38. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.320.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., p.321.
41. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.22.
42. Nateq, interview, Paris, 1992.
43. Shari'ati, C.W.3, p.20.
44. Qazi, interview, Paris 1994.
45. Shari'ati, C.W.30, pp.19,111. C.W.2, pp.73-4, 132, 184.
46. Qazi, interview, Paris, 1994.
47. Qazi, interview, Paris, 1994.
48. Pakdaman, interview, Paris, 1995.
49. Pakdaman, interview, Paris, 1995.
50. Bani-Sadr, interview, Paris, 1995.
51. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.327.
52. Shari'ati, C.W.30, pp.65, 120.
53. Fanon (1982) p.254.
54. Harati and Alavi, interview, Tehran and Mashhad, 1995.
55. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.2.
56. Shari'ati, C.W.17, p.169.
57. Shari'ati, C.W.16, p.80.
58. Shari'ati, C.W.24, p.331.
59. Ibid., pp.68, 71, 73-4.
60. Ibid., pp.322-6.
61. Ibid., 24, p.256.
62. Ibid., pp.331-2.
63. Shari'ati, C.W.4, p.11.
64. Shari'ati, C.W.2, p.51.
65. Nateq, interview, Paris, 1992.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Information in this section is based on Bani-Sadr's recollections. Bani-Sadr, interview, Paris 1995.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.

71. Shari'ati, C.W.16, pp.19-25.
72. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.22.
73. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.24.
74. Ibid., pp.24-5.

Chapter Ten

1. From his hearings at SAVAK in Rowhani (1372) p.150.
2. Ibid., p.698.
3. Ibid., pp.148-9.
4. Ibid., p.699.
5. *Iran-e Azad*, no.10, Tir 1342. June, 1963.
6. Omrani, M, in *Mi'ad ba Ali* (1373) p.222.
7. Hejazi in *Sa'idi* (1370) p.156.
8. Ibid., p.420.
9. Shari'ati, C.W.33, part. 1. p.416.
10. Shafi'i Kadkani, interview, Tehran, 1995.
11. Shari'ati, C.W.33, part 1. pp.392-3.
12. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.90.
13. Rowhani (1372) p.173.
14. Interview with Mirzazadeh (Azarm). Paris, 1994.
15. Shari'ati, C.W.33, part 1. pp.283, 360.
16. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1992. Among those present were Ne'mat Mirzazadeh and Mohammad-Hossein Rowhani.
17. Shari'ati, C.W.33, part. 1. p.360.
18. Ibid., p.315.
19. This information was, however, not made public during Shari'ati's life. It was first divulged by Daniel Massignon, 'La conversion de Louis Massignon', aspects historiques, *Islam - Christiana*, no.14, 1988, p.127. Keryell (1993) p.101. Keryell tries to prove that it was Christ who appeared to Massignon in his vision, never explaining why Massignon himself spoke about a Seyyed with a green turban who read Qur'anic

- verses to him. See Keryell p.203.
20. Massignon (1983) p.80.
 21. Ibid., p.81.
 22. Shari'ati, C.W.28. p.306.
 23. L. Massignon, 'Salman Pak', in Mason (1989). p.106.
 24. Shari'ati, C.W.10. p.39.
 25. Ibid., p.40.
 26. Shari'ati, C.W.28. p.307.
 27. Shari'ati, C.W.13. p.335.
 28. Shari'ati, C.W.28. p.301.
 29. Ibid., p.306.
 30. Ibid., p.307.
 31. Ibid., p.302.
 32. Ibid.
 33. Ibid., pp.302-3.
 34. Ibid., pp.303-4.
 35. Ibid., p.304.
 36. Ibid., pp.304-5.
 37. Ibid., p.305.
 38. Ibid., p.308.
 39. Shari'ati, C.W.13. p.582. In C.W.10. p.40, Shari'ati states that he spent two years translating the article. This probably refers to the period between the time he started his translation and the final publication of the book.
 40. Shari'ati, *Salman Pak*, Qom: Entesharat-e Hurr, n.d. The introduction is dated Azar 1343.
 41. Shari'ati, C.W.13. pp.593-5.
 42. Ibid., p.596.
 43. Shari'ati, C.W.33. p.254.
 44. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris 1993.
 45. Ibid.
 46. Shari'ati, C.W.13. p.588.
 47. The information in this paragraph is based on Reza Davari, *Kayhan*, 25 Ordibehesht 1359.
 48. Shari'ati, C.W.13. p.591.
 49. Shari'ati (1363) p.9.
 50. Ibid., p.12.
 51. Ibid., p.21.
 52. Ibid., p.34.
 53. Ibid., p.126.
 54. Ibid., p.66.
 55. Ibid., p.44.

56. Ibid., p.140.
57. Matini, J: 'Khaterat-e Dr Ali Shari'ati dar Daneshgah-e Mashhad (Ferdowsi)'. *Iranshenasi*, vol.5. no.4, Winter, 1994, p.852.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., pp.852-3.
62. Ibid., p.854.
63. Ibid.
64. Sarparasti-e Daneshjuyan dar Faranseh, no.2725, 21/12/1342.
65. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1993.
66. Letter dated 44/8/27. Number 5022 from Mashhad University in Shari'at-Razavi, 1374, p.107.
67. Ibid.
68. Shari'ati, C.W.13. p.598.
69. Shari'ati, C.W.28. p.418.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., p.419.
72. Matini, *Iranshenasi* 5/4 (1994) p.859.
73. The information in this paragraph is based on an interview with Zaryab Kho'i some three weeks before his unfortunate and sudden death. I am grateful to his school friend Rasul Purnaki for arranging this interview.
74. Letter no.24014, dated 1344/12/29. Printed in Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.277.
75. Shari'ati's letter to his father and stepmother in Shari'ati-Razavi, p.95.

Chapter Eleven

1. Shari'ati, C.W.13 and 33, volumes one and two.
2. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1280.
3. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.230.
4. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1280.
5. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.252.
6. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1285.
7. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.252.

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.253.
11. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1281.
12. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.901.
13. Ernst (1985) p.4.
14. Sajadi, *Farhang-e loghat, estelihat va ta'birat-e erfani*, 1370. p.505.
15. Ernst, (1985) p.137.
16. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.208.
17. Ibid., p.248.
18. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.227.
19. Ibid. p.16.
20. Ibid., p.17.
21. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.37.
22. Ibid., p.38.
23. Ibid.
24. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.19. The reference to 'pains that like leprosy ...' is to Hedayat's famous line.
25. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.19.
26. Ibid.
27. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.392 and C.W.33, vol.2, p.885.
28. Shari'ati, C.W.12, pp.93-4.
29. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.887.
30. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.226.
31. Ibid., p.227, 144.
32. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.227.
33. Shari'ati, C.W.12, pp.92-3.
34. *Nashriyeh-e Farhang-e Khorasan*, Year 2, no.6. Shahrvivar, 1337.
35. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.110.
36. Ibid., p.40.
37. Ibid., p.28.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p.63.
40. Ibid., p.194.
41. Ibid., p.148.
42. Ibid., p.143.
43. Ibid., p.35.
44. Ibid., p.202.
45. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.870.
46. Ibid.
47. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.366.
48. Shari'ati, C.W.35, p.339.
49. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.906.
50. Ayn al-Qodhat Hamadani *Tamhidat* (n.d) p.12.
51. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.750.
52. Ayn al-Qodhat Hamadani *Tamhidat*, (n.d.) p.22.
53. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.751.
54. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.367.
55. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.19. For further references to *vahdat-e vojud* as the object of the search for the Truth see C.W.33, vol.1, p.521. *Vahdat-e vojud* as the primal reason for creation, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1129.
56. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.70.
57. Shari'ati, C.W.35, p.336.
58. Ibid., p.338.
59. Shari'ati, C.W.35, p.338.
60. Ibid.
61. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.239.
62. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.576.
63. Ibid., p.578.
64. Ibid., p.334.
65. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.257,8. For other references see same volume, p.608, C.W.33, vol.1, p.422.
66. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.521.
67. Nicholson (1989) p.22.
68. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, pp.239-241 and 524-5.
69. Ibid., pp.423-4.
70. Ibid., p.425.
71. Shari'ati, C.W.13, pp.239-40.
72. Ibid., p.241.
73. Ibid., p.242.
74. Ibid., p.189.
75. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.738.
76. Ibid.
77. Attar, *Tazkerat* (1372) p.185 and 802.
78. Nicholson (1989) p.129.
79. Attar, *Tazkerat* (1372) p.805.
80. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.265.
81. Ibid., p.265, 266.
82. Ibid., p.266.
83. Ibid., p.267.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.37.

87. Ibid., p.8.
88. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.527.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid., p.529.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., p.269.
94. Ibid., p.277.
95. Ibid., p.279.
96. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.289. The line from Hafez is: 'There is no buffer between the lover and the loved, you are your own veil, Hafez, remove yourself.'
97. Ibid., p.280.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid., p.281.
100. Ibid., pp.282, 286.
101. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.289.
102. Ibid., p.286.
103. 'Ayn al-Qozat, *Tamhidat*, p.115 of the text.
104. Ibid.
105. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.289.
106. Ibid., p.180.
107. Ibid., p.290 and 531.
108. Ernst (1985) p.27.
109. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.190.
110. Nicholson (1989) p.57.
111. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, pp 206, 431.
112. Ibid., vol.2, p.947.
113. Ibid., vol.1, p.36.
114. Shari'ati, C.W.13, pp.358-9, 456-7.
115. Ibid., pp.431-3.
116. Z. Rahnema (2536) pp.227-8.
117. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.184.
118. Zarinkub. (1357) p.44.
119. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.196.
120. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.45.
121. Shari'ati, C.W.16, pp.277-8, 285, 243, 314. C.W.33, vol.1, p.104. C.W.9, p.206.
122. Ibid., pp.279-80.
123. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.178, 258 and C.W.18, p.329.
124. Ibid., p.45.
125. Shari'ati, C.W.29, p.655.

126. Shari'ati, C.W.35, vol.1, pp.339-40.
127. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.339.
128. Nafisi, S. (1371) p.55.
129. *Futuwwat* refers to the life of the *fata*. *Fata* literally means a handsome and brave youth. The term *fata* appears often in the Qur'an (*Surah al-anbiya*). See Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Sulami (1983) p.6.
130. Ibid., p.21.
131. Ibid., p.13.
132. Shari'ati, C.W.27, p.195.
133. Shari'ati, C.W.13, pp.338-9.
134. Nafisi (1371) pp.140-2.
135. Zarinkub (1357) p.349.
136. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.10.
137. Shari'ati, C.W.27, pp.195-6.
138. Ibid., pp.196-7.
139. Petrushevsky (1351) pp.36, 38, 50-1.
140. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.12.
141. Shari'ati, C.W.7, pp.144-6.
142. Shari'ati, C.W.16, p.321.
143. Shari'ati, C.W.24, p.226.
144. Shari'ati, C.W.14, p.208.
145. Shari'ati, C.W.2, p.42.
146. Ibid., pp.48-9.
147. Ibid., p.61.
148. Ibid., pp.52-3.
149. Ibid., pp.51-3.
150. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.211.

Chapter Twelve

1. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.2, p.1074.
2. Shari'ati, C.W. 20, p.138.
3. Information on Chandel in this lecture is based on Shari'ati, C.W. 20, pp.141-3.
4. *Khorasan*, 12 Khordad 1334.
5. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.1, p.154.
6. Ibid., p.156.
7. Ibid., p.157.
8. Ibid., p.154.
9. Carrel (1950) p.71.
10. Shari'ati, C.W.8, p.44.
11. Shari'ati, C.W. 30, p.631 (Chandel),

- p.632 (Shandel), C.W.33, vol.2, p.1066 (Schandel).
12. Shari'ati, C.W. 25, pp.393,399; C.W.33, vol.2, p.1013. Chandel has also been given the first names, 'Haute', see C.W. 12, p.244 and C.W. 24, p.253 and 'Mon Coeur', see C.W. 25, p.399.
13. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.1, p.325.
14. Shari'ati, C.W. 4, p.130.
15. Shari'ati, C.W. 5, p.56.
16. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.2, p.708.
17. Shari'ati, C.W. 27, p.151.
18. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.1, p.15. C.W. 33, vol.2, p.759.
19. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.2, p.759.
20. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.1, p.23.
21. Ibid., p.46.
22. Ibid., p.523.
23. Ibid., p.548.
24. Ibid., p.612.
25. Shari'ati, C.W. 35, vol.2, p.675.
26. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.2, p.692.
27. Ibid. pp.743, 1166.
28. Ibid., p.742.
29. Ibid., p.915.
30. Ibid., p.759.
31. Shari'ati, C.W. 12, p.26.
32. Ibid., p.266.
33. Shari'ati, C.W. 25, p.393.
34. Ibid., p.399.
35. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.46. Elsewhere, the publishing date of 1967 is provided for the same work. See Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.2, p.1066.
36. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1007. The date of publication of the Green Notebook is also cited as 1946. See C.W.13, p.334.
37. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.2, p.709.
38. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.534.
39. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.708.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p.722.
42. Ibid., p.708.
43. Ibid., p.722.
44. Ibid., p.709.

45. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.389.
46. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.2, p.996.
47. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.389.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.209.
51. Ibid., p.213.
52. Shari'ati, C.W. 13, p.267.
53. Ibid., pp.395-8.
54. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.2, p.759.
55. Ibid. pp. 786, 808, 811, 827.
56. On the basis of the Persian transliteration, one could call her Chapel, but Shari'ati himself chooses the French spelling and refers to her as Chapelle. See Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.1, p.534 and C.W. 33, vol.2, p.809.
57. Shari'ati, C.W.21, p.72. C.W.35, vol.2, p.674.
58. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol. 2, p.743.
59. Ibid., p.974.
60. Ibid., pp.760, 793.
61. Ibid., p.760.
62. Ibid. pp.760, 788.
63. Ibid., vol.2, p.761.
64. Ibid. vol.2, p.785.
65. Based on the address that he sent to a friend in Mashhad, his correct address was 14 and not 15 Rue La Croix. Letter dated 20/4/1960.
66. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.808.
67. Ibid., p.759.
68. Ibid., p.810.
69. Ibid., pp.818-19.
70. Ibid., pp.822-3.
71. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.31.
72. Ibid., p.331.
73. Ibid., p.124.
74. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.808.
75. Ibid., p.789.
76. Ibid., p.784.
77. Ibid., p.776.
78. Ibid., p.1073.
79. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.22.
80. Ibid., p.22.
81. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.338.
82. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.974.

83. Ibid., p.802.
84. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.22.
85. Shari'ati, C.W.14, p.153.
86. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.56. Shari'ati erroneously refers to his department as the 16th, whereas in fact the street and the house he refers to is in the 15th.
87. I am most grateful to Sara Shari'ati, who provided me with a copy of this extremely important letter, at a time when I had gradually come to question the existence of a Mademoiselle Solange. The letter is written on 15 and 16 of July 1959.
88. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.310.
89. Ibid., p.311.
90. Ibid., p.303.
91. Ibid., p.304.
92. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.332.
93. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.302.
94. Ibid., pp.308-9.
95. Shari'ati, C.W.13, pp.295-6.
96. Ibid., p.300.
97. Ibid., p.332.
98. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.997.
99. Shari'ati, C.W. 21, p.21.
100. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.582.
101. Ibid., p.582.
102. Ibid., p.584.
103. Ibid., p.297.
104. Ibid., p.299.
105. Shari'ati, C.W.13, pp.300-1.
106. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.300.
107. Ibid., p.300.
108. Ibid.
109. The information in this paragraph is based on research in the area, in particular on the evidence given by the owner of a fairly recent cafe right across from the original, 'Chez Mme Lea'.
110. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.299.
111. Ibid., p.434 and C.W.33, vol.2, p.1055.
112. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.226.
113. Ibid., p.228.
114. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.331.
115. Ibid., pp.332-3.
116. Ibid., pp.333-5.
117. Ibid., p.359.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid., p.566.
120. Ibid., p.286.
121. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol. 2, p. 912
122. Shari'ati, C.W.13, p.330.
123. Ibid., pp.356-8.
124. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol. 1 p.229.
125. Ibid., pp.231-2.
126. This account is based on the information kindly provided by Mr Ashkan Avishan in his correspondence of 5/11/94.
127. Shari'ati, C.W. 33, vol.2, p.1167.
128. This account is based on a conversation with Dr Shafi'i Kadkani, Tehran, 1994.
129. This account is based on a private interview with Taher Ahmadzadeh, Mashhad, 1995.
130. Kaveh is the liberating hero in Ferdowsi's 'Epic of Kings' who rides the country of the bloodthirsty despot called Zahak.

Chapter Thirteen

1. Farideh 'G'. interview, Mashhad, 1995. Ms 'G'. wishes to remain anonymous.
2. Matini, *Iranshenasi*, 5/4 (1994) p.859.
3. Reza 'A'. interview, Mashhad, 1995. Mr 'A'. wishes to remain anonymous.
4. A. Kamyabi Mask, interview, Paris, 1994.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Akbari-Marznak in Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.109.
8. Ashrafi, interview, Tehran, 1995.
9. Ashkan-e Avishan, 'Faratar az bavarha', *Elm va Jame'*, no.117. Ordibehesht 1373. p.52.

10. R. Daneshvar, interview, Paris, 1993.
11. A. Ashrafi, interview, Tehran, 1995.
12. Ahmad, interview, Paris, 1994. Mr Ahmad wishes to remain anonymous.
13. Reza Qanadan in *Iran Khabar*, vol.1, no.14.
14. Ibid.
15. Matini, *Iranshenasi*, 5/4 (1994) p.857.
16. R. Daneshvar, interview, Paris, 1993.
17. A. Ashrafi, interview, Tehran, 1995.
18. Ashkan-e Avishan, 'Faratar az bavarha', p.53.
19. Matini, *Iranshenasi* 5/4 (1994) p.858.
20. A letter from Jalal Matini, Head of the Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, in Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.135.
21. Reza Qanadan in *Iran Khabar*, vol.1, no.14.
22. A. Kamyabi Mask, interview, Paris, 1994.
23. Mosaddeq Rashti, interview, Tehran, 1995.
24. A letter dated 49/11/11, no.6691. In Shari'at-Razavi, p.117.
25. Matini, *Iranshenasi* 5/4 (1994) p.858.
26. Reza Qanadan in *Iran Khabar*, vol.1, no., 13.
27. Zaryab-e Kho'i, interview, Tehran, 1995.
28. Matini, *Iranshenasi*, 5/4 (1994) p.856.
29. Shari'ati, C.W.27, p.16.
30. Ibid., p.17.
31. Shari'ati, C.W.33, part 1, p.133. Shari'ati, C.W.34 (Namehha), pp.261-4.
32. Ashkan Avishan, *Elm va Jame'*, no.117. Ordibehesht.
33. Ibid., p.55.
34. Farideh 'G'. interview, Mashhad, 1995.
35. Reza 'A'. interview, Mashhad, 1995.
36. A. Ashrafi and Mosaddeq Rashti, interview, Tehran, 1995.
37. A. Kamyabi Mask, interview, Paris, 1994.
38. A. Avishan, Personal correspondence, 23 September 1994.
39. Shari'ati, C.W.33, part 1, p.275.
40. Ibid., p.204.
41. Ibid., p.133.
42. The information in this section is based on C. Sahami, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
43. The information in this section is based on A. Kamyabi Mask, interview, Paris, 1994.
44. Kamyabi Mask, interview, Paris 1994.
45. This theme was later developed in his regular lectures. See Shari'ati, C.W.12, p.206 and C.W.31, p.172.
46. Kamyabi Mask, interview, Paris, 1994.
47. The information in this paragraph is based on C. Sahami, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
48. A. Alawi, interview, Mashhad, 1995 and Daneshvar, interview, Paris, 1993.
49. This section is based on Ashrafi, interview, Tehran, 1995; Reza 'A'. interview, Mashhad, 1995; Ashkan Avishan's account in *Elm va Jame'* no.117. Ordibehesht, 1373, and personal correspondence with Avishan 23 September 1994.
50. Ashkan Avishan, 'Faratar az Bavarha', *Elm va Jame'*, no.117 Ordibehesht, 1373. p.56.
51. Alawi, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
52. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.215.
53. Ibid., vol.2, p.1109.
54. Ibid., vol.2, p.1109.
55. Ibid., p.1110.
56. Ibid., p.727.
57. Ibid., p.1135.
58. Ibid., vol.1, pp.52, 70, 127, 262.
59. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1992.
60. Ibid.
61. Avishan, Personal Correspondence, 23 September 1994.
62. Daneshvar, interview. Paris, 1993.
63. Interview with Iraj Saghirini

- Yahosseini (1373) pp.36–7
64. *Ibid.*, p.38.
65. *Ibid.*, p.37.
66. *Ibid.*, p.39.
67. Information on the book-club is based on Reza 'A', interview, Mashhad, 1995.
68. Shari'ati, C.W. 25, p.346.
69. *Ibid.*, p.334.
70. *Ibid.*, p.327.
71. *Ibid.*, p.328.
72. Ashrafi, interview, Tehran, 1995.
73. Shari'ati, C.W.35, part 1, p.14.
74. *Ibid.*, p.16.
75. *Ibid.*, pp.17–18.
76. Sahami, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
77. Daneshvar, interview, Paris 1993.
78. Sheikh Abdolkarem Shari'ati in *Miyad ba Ali*, (1373) p.201.
79. Haqshenas, T, interview, Paris, 1992.
80. Haqshenas, T, interview, Paris, 1994.
81. Daneshvar, interview, Paris, 1993.
82. Kamyabi Mask, interview, Paris, 1994.
83. *Kayhan*, 25 Ordibehesht 1359. In this article, Emami maintains that the date was 1347 or 1968, which is incorrect since the letter which he receives from Al-e Ahmad after this meeting is dated 20 Day 1345 or 10 January 1967. *Etela'at*, 18 Shahrivar 1359.
84. Amin Banani, however, claims to have met Shari'ati at Al-e Ahmad's home in 1965. Hansen, B. 'The Westoxication of Iran: Deception and Reactions of Behrangi, Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shari'ati' in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 15 (1983) n. 38.
85. Homa Nateq, interview, Paris, 1992.
86. 'Chand nameh az Jalal Al-e Ahmad', *Talkh*, no.1, Bahman 1366.
87. Daneshvar, S. in *Avalin salgard-e Doctor Sami*, pp.88–90.
88. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1992. Dehbashi (1364) p.248.
89. Shari'ati, C.W.19, p.299, 303.
90. Shams Al-e Ahmad, 1369, p.536.
91. H. Salehi in *Etela'at*, 18 Shahrivar 1359.
92. Daneshvar, *Yadnameh*, p.93.
93. Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Dar Khedmat va Khiyanat-e Rowshanfekran* (n.d) p.52.
94. 'Chand Nameh az Al-e Ahmad'.
95. From Jalal's 1969 (Bahman 1347) diary, cited in Shams Al-e Ahmad, 1369, p.69.
96. Shari'ati, C.W.33. vol.1. p.382.
97. Daneshvar in *Avalin salgard-e Doctor Sami*, p.89.
98. Shari'ati, C.W.31, p.414.
99. Shari'ati, C.W.6, pp.86–7.

Chapter Fourteen

1. Puyan (n.p, n.d) pp.11–12.
2. *Ibid.*, p.3.
3. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.490.
4. *Ibid.*, p.20.
5. Shams Al-e Ahmad (1369) p.536.
6. *Hirmand*, no.47, 21 Farvardin 1348.
7. *Hirmand*, no.49, 4 Ordibehesht 1348.
8. *Hirmand*, no.57, 5 Tir 1348.
9. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.4. Mosaddeq Rashti, interview with Sara Shari'ati.
10. Shari'ati, C.W.31, p.65.
11. Shari'ati, C.W.7, p.12.
12. *Ibid.*, p.11.
13. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.5.
14. *Ibid.*, p.13.
15. *Ibid.*, p.5.
16. *Ibid.*, p.20.
17. *Ibid.*, p.58.
18. *Ibid.*, p.31.
19. *Ibid.*, p.32.
20. *Ibid.*, p.61.
21. *Ibid.*, p.27.
22. Shari'ati, C.W.31, p.172.
23. Shari'ati, C.W.7, p.98.
24. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.61.
25. *Ibid.*, p.30.
26. *Ibid.*, pp.114.

27. *Ibid.*, pp.26–7.
28. *Ibid.*, pp.26–9.
29. *Ibid.*, p.28.
30. *Ibid.*, pp.513–14.
31. *Ibid.*, p.43.
32. *Ibid.*, p.41.
33. Shari'ati, C.W.10, p.79.
34. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.45.
35. *Ibid.*, p.56.
36. *Ibid.*, p.95.
37. *Ibid.*, pp.93–4.
38. *Ibid.*, pp.24–5.
39. *Ibid.*, p.78.
40. *Ibid.*, p.88.
41. Shari'ati, C.W.16, p.41.
42. *Hirmand*, no.50, 18 Ordibehesht 1348.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Information in this paragraph is based on Marznak's account in; Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.120.
45. Shari'ati, C.W.19, p.354.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, p.362.
49. *Ibid.*, p.366.
50. *Faslha-ye Sabz*, No date and no number. Editor: Hormoz Riahi. From the information inside, the date of the review is between October and November of 1969 (Mehr-Aban 1348). I am grateful to Shahram Qanbari who provided me with a copy of this review.
51. Akbari's book was originally supposed to be called, 'The theories and beliefs of Ali Shari'ati'.
52. Akbari (2536) pp.32, 107.
53. Tolu', interview, France, 1994.
54. Akbari (2536) p.9.
55. *Ibid.*, p.10.
56. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.22.
57. *Ibid.*, p.113.
58. *Ibid.*, pp.22–3.
59. Akbari (2536) p.39.
60. Shari'ati, C.W.30, pp.24–5.
61. Akbari (2536) pp.41–5.
62. Shari'ati, C.W.30, pp.32–4.
63. Akbari (2536) p.59.
64. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.78.
65. Akbari (2536) p.64.
66. *Ibid.*, p.75.
67. *Ibid.*, p.84.
68. *Ibid.*, pp.86, 91–2.
69. *Ibid.*, pp.83, 89.
70. *Ibid.*, p.87.
71. Shari'ati, C.W.35, part 1, p.81.
72. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.23.
73. Akbari (2536) p.109.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Daneshvar, interview, Paris, 1993.
76. *Ibid.*
77. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1992.
78. Daneshvar, interview, Paris, 1993.
79. Shari'ati, C.W.17, p.196.
80. All the information on the content of the letter from Puyan and Ahmadzadeh to Shari'ati is from Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1992, 1993.
81. Daneshvar, interview, Paris, 1993.
82. Ali Tolu', interview, France, 1994.
83. Iraj Saghiri in *Seyyed Qasem ya Hosseini*, 1373, p.24.
84. This information is based on 'Hashem', interview, Paris, 1994. Hashem wishes to remain anonymous.
85. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris, 1992.
86. Ashkan Avishan, 'Faratar az bavarha', p.53.
87. Shari'ati, C.W.33, part 1, pp.250–8.
88. *Ibid.*, p.253. See C.W.30, p.63.
89. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.477.
90. Shari'ati, C.W.33, part 1, p.253. See Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.58.
91. Ansari-Zanjani (1351) p.4.
92. Shari'ati, C.W.30, p.63.
93. Ansari Zanjani (1351) p.12.
94. *Ibid.*, p.15. See Shari'ati, C.W.30, pp.513–14.
95. *Ibid.*, p.17.
96. *Ibid.*, p.26.
97. *Ibid.*, p.31.

98. Ibid., p.33.
99. Ibid., p.38.
100. Ibid., p.39.
101. Ibid., p.57.
102. Ibid., p.56.
103. Ibid., p.69.
104. Ibid., pp.71-3.
105. Ibid., p.77.
106. Ibid., pp.78, 79.
107. Ibid., pp.121,122.
108. Ibid., pp.124-6.
109. Ibid., p.130.
110. Ibid., p.133.
111. Ibid., p.138.
112. Ibid., pp.138-9.
113. Ibid., p.131.
114. Shari'ati, C.W.1, p.174.
115. Ibid., p.175.

Chapter Fifteen

1. The information in this section is based on a interview with Ali Asghar Mosaddeq Rashti. Tehran, 1995.
2. C. Sahami, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
3. Mosaddeq Rashti, interview, Tehran, 1995.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Rowhani (1372) pp.152, 665.
7. Rowhani (1372), pp.152, 665.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p.152.
10. See Matini's innuendos in *Iranshenasi*, 5/4 (1994) pp.855, 859.
11. Rowhani, 1372, p.665.
12. See Rowhani's insinuations in Rowhani, (1372) pp.152, 176 and compare it with SAVAK's clear statement that the document is the result of an 'interview' in Rowhani's own book. pp.710-11.
13. See for example the numerous documents with only a few lines from the middle, clearly the top and bottom have been deleted by

Rowhani since they would probably enhance Shari'ati's image in the eyes of the public. See Rowhani (1372) pp.739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, etc.

14. Rowhani (1372) p.153.
15. Ibid., pp.153-72.
16. Ibid., p.173.
17. Poulantzas (1975) pp.259, 285.
18. Rowhani (1372) pp.173-4.
19. Rowhani (1372) p.174.
20. Ibid., pp.174-5.
21. Ibid., p.175.
22. Ibid., p.175.
23. Ibid., p.175.
24. Rowhani, 1372, p.166.
25. Ibid., p.171.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., p.168.
28. Ibid., p.165.
29. Ibid., p.170.
30. Ibid., p.665.
31. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.131.
32. Ibid.
33. Rowhani (1372) p.707. The text of this letter (11 April 1969 or 1348/2/7) has not been published by Rowhani. Yet we know of its existence since the response of Mashhad's SAVAK dated 24 April 1969 or 48/2/20 refers to this letter and date. Rowhani's reason for not having published this letter in which SAVAK is suspicious of and reproachful towards Shari'ati, like many similar other letters, seems obvious.
34. Rowhani (1372) p.707.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p.706. The text of this letter (22 April 1969 or 1348/2/18) has not been published by Rowhani. Yet we know of its existence since the response of Mashhad's SAVAK dated 25 April 1969 or 48/2/21 refers to this letter and its date.
37. Rowhani (1372) p.706.
38. Ibid.

39. Ibid. p.177. Moqaddam's original letter is not published by Rowhani.
40. Ibid., p.177.
41. Ibid., p.708. The text of this letter (24 June 1969 or 1348/4/3) has not been published by Rowhani. Yet we know of its existence since the response of Mashhad's SAVAK dated 7 July 1969 or 48/4/16 refers to this letter and its date.
42. Rowhani (1372) p.710.
43. Ibid., p.711.
44. Ibid., p.712.
45. Ibid., p.711.
46. Ibid., p.708.
47. Ibid., p.181. The original manuscript of this telegram is not published by Rowhani. E.N. categorically denies acting as an intermediary between SAVAK and Shari'ati, Private interview, Paris 1994.
48. Rowhani (1372) p.713. This is in response to a letter written by Tehran's SAVAK dated 48/6/3 which Rowhani has not published.
49. Rowhani (1372) p.713.
50. Ibid., p.720.
51. Ibid., pp.720-1.
52. Ibid., pp.715-18. See page 721, where Tehran's SAVAK clearly states that the document sent by Shari'ati is 10 pages. What Rowhani has printed in his book is four pages of the original manuscript only two of which are continuous.
53. Rowhani (1372) pp.715, 184.
54. Ibid., pp.716, 184.
55. Ibid., p.187.
56. Ibid., p.187.
57. Ibid., p.188.
58. Ibid., p.718.
59. Ibid., p.189.
60. Ibid., p.724.
61. Ibid., p.724.
62. Ibid., p.726.
63. Ibid., p.192.
64. Ibid., p.192.
65. Ibid., p.192.
66. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1&2. The two volumes come to over 1300 pages.
67. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.93.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., p.520.
70. Ibid., pp.520-1.
71. Ibid., p.520.
72. Ibid., p.112.
73. Ibid., p.147.
74. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1140.
75. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.119.
76. Ibid., p.198.
77. Ibid., p.113.
78. Ibid., p.202.
79. Ibid., p.203.
80. Ibid., p.225.
81. Ibid., p.496.
82. Ibid., p.342.
83. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.1181.
84. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.282.
85. Ibid., p.283.
86. Ibid., p.386.
87. Ibid., p.386.
88. Ibid., p.387.
89. Ibid., p.575.
90. Ibid., p.387.
91. Ibid., p.388.
92. Ibid., p.242.
93. Ibid., p.243.
94. Ibid., pp.243-4.
95. The Centre for Peace was a front organization for the Tudeh Party.
96. Reza Qanadan in *Iran Khabar*, vol.1, no.15.

Chapter Sixteen

1. Alibaba'i, interview, Cologne, 1993.
2. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1994.
3. *Bahsi darbareh-e marja'iyat va rowhaniyat*, Tehran:Sherkat-e Sahami-e Enteshar, 1341.
4. Rowshani, *Pasokhi be nameh-e ostad* n. d, pp.256-63.

5. *Ruznameh-e Rasmi*, no.6686, 11. 11. 1346. I am grateful to Nasser Minachi who kindly provided me with this document.
6. The complete statute of Hosseiniyeh Ershad, p.6, Clause 8. I am grateful to Nasser Minachi for providing me with a copy of this document.
7. *Ruznameh-e Rasmi*, no.6686, 11. 11. 1346.
8. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1994.
9. The complete statute of Hosseiniyeh Ershad, p.7, appendix 6.
10. *Ruznameh-e Rasmi*, no.6686, 11. 11. 1346.
11. The complete statute of Hosseiniyeh Ershad, p.2, appendix to Clause 2.
12. Pajum (1370) p.110.
13. Pajum (1370) p.111.
14. Davani (1372) pp.44-5.
15. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.91.
16. *Seiri dar zendegi-ye Ostad Motahhari* (1370) p.127.
17. Karbaschi (1371) p.316.
18. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.2, p.730.
19. *Tarikh va Farhang Mo'aser*, vol.3 and 4, 1371, p.390.
20. *Sargozashtha-ye vijeh* (1370) vol.1, p.65.
21. *Mohammad khatam anbia*, vol.1 (1363) p.482.
22. Davani, A. 1372, p.60.
23. *Khatam Anbia*, pp.463-4, 237-9, 369.
24. Ali Shari'ati's speeches at Hosseiniyeh Ershad. I am grateful to Naser Minachi for providing me with a copy of such records. This lecture has also been referred to as 'Ravesh-e shenakht-e Eslam'.
25. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1994.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. *Seiri dar zendegani*, pp.98-9.
30. Ibid., pp.100-7.
31. Ibid., p.102.
32. Ibid., p.104. The publishers of Motahhari's letters have deleted the names of those accused by Motahhari. A real name will appear in italics, where in the original it has been deleted and the author is presuming the individual's identity on the basis of research.
33. Ibid., p.106.
34. Ibid., pp.106-7.
35. Davani (1372) p.44.
36. Ibid.
37. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.73.
38. *Kayhan*, 19 Azar 1347, 10 December 1968.
39. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.75.
40. Ibid., p.76.
41. *Kayhan*, 20 Azar 1347, 11 December 1968.
42. *Etela'at*, 19 Azar 1347.
43. *Iran-e Farda*, 'Nameh-e Montasher Nashodeh-e Doctor Shari'ati', Esfand 1373.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Shari'ati, C.W.26, p.9.
48. Ibid., p.630.
49. Ibid., p.499.
50. Ibid., pp.523-8.
51. Ibid., p.577.
52. Ibid., pp.601, 624.
53. Ibid., p.503.
54. Ibid., p.502.
55. Ibid., p.631.
56. Ibid., p.632.
57. Letter no.2927 in Shari'at-Razavi (1374), document no.7.
58. Ibid.
59. Rowhani, H. (1372) p.706.
60. Ibid., p.718.
61. Ibid., p.724.
62. Ibid., p.725.
63. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.58.
64. *Mohammad Khatam-e Anbia* (1363) p.348.
65. Ibid., p.347.
66. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.64.

67. Ibid., p.61.
68. Alibaba'i, interview, Cologne, 1993. On this occasion Hashemi Rafsanjani is said to have been also present.
69. Davani, A. 1372, p.45.
70. Pajum (1370) p.574.
71. Ibid. p.574.
72. Ibid.
73. *Hirmand*, no.50, 18 Ordibehest 1348.
74. Razmju (1369) p.115.
75. Ibid., p.116.
76. Ibid., p.117. Mohammad Baqer Majlesi, who compiled the reports or *hadiths* of Shi'i Imams in his 102 volume *Bahar al-anwar* and who preached *taqiyya* or dissimulation in the face of tyrannical rulers to avoid exposing oneself to danger, was one of the main targets of Shari'ati's criticism of Safavid Islam.
77. Ibid., p.118.
78. Shari'ati, C.W.26, p.126.
79. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.155.
80. Ibid.
81. Matini, *Iranshenasi*, 5/4 (1994).
82. Shari'ati, C.W.29, p.8.
83. Ibid., p.19.
84. Ibid., p.16.
85. Ibid., p.27.
86. Ibid., p.38, 51.
87. Ibid., p.76.
88. Ibid., p.77.
89. Ibid., p.89.
90. Ibid., p.113.
91. Ibid., p.96.
92. Ibid., p.73.
93. Ibid., pp.95, 105.
7. Ibid., p.73.
8. Ibid., p.83.
9. Ibid., p.90.
10. Ibid., p.94.
11. Ibid., p.94.
12. Ibid., p.104.
13. Ibid., p.10.
14. Ibid., p.18.
15. Shari'ati, C.W.22, p.12.
16. Ibid., p.16.
17. Ibid., p.25.
18. Ibid., p.51.
19. Ibid., p.17.
20. Ibid., pp.21-3.
21. Ibid., p.27.
22. Ibid., p.53.
23. Ibid., p.54.
24. Shari'ati, C.W.20, p.68.
25. Ibid., p.85.
26. Ibid., p.100.
27. Ibid., pp.68-9.
28. Ibid., p.102.
29. Ibid., p.106.
30. Ibid., p.106.
31. *Ferdowsi*, 9 Shahrivar 1349.
32. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1993.
33. Davani (1372) p.46.
34. Davani (1372) pp.47-8.
35. Ibid., p.48.
36. Ibid., pp.48-9.
37. Ibid., pp.49-50.
38. *Sargozashtha-ye vijeh* (1370) p.65.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p.66.
42. Ibid., p.108.
43. Ibid.
44. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.
45. Ibid.
46. Letter dated 12/7/49, no.579 in Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.280.
47. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.145.
48. Ibid., p.147.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., pp.147, 149.
52. Ibid., p.151.

Chapter Seventeen

1. Shari'ati, C.W.33, vol.1, p.252.
2. Shari'ati, C.W.5, p.75.
3. Ibid., p.48.
4. Ibid., p.36.
5. Ibid., pp.23-4, 31.
6. Ibid., pp.53, 51, 75.

53. *Seiri dar zendegani*, pp.108–9.
54. *Ibid.*, p.110.
55. Matini, *Iranshenasi*, 5/7 (1994) pp.861–2.
56. Mr Minachi was kind enough to provide me with a copy of this declaration.
57. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1993.
58. *Seiri dar zendegani*, p.110.
59. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1993.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Seiri dar zendegani*, p.112.
62. *Ibid.*, p.110.
63. Shari'ati, C.W.19, p.10.
64. *Ibid.*, p.10,11,13.
65. *Ibid.*, p.3.
66. *Ibid.*, p.16.
67. *Ibid.*, p.9.
68. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.
69. *Seiri dar zendegani*, p.129.
70. Ali-Baba'i, interview, Colgne, 1993.
71. *Seiri dar zendegani*, pp.122–3.
72. Motahhari, M., *Moshkelat asasi* (n.d) pp.22, 23, 35.

Chapter Eighteen

1. *Sargozashtha-ye vijeh*, p.67.
2. Bahonar returned to lecture at Ershad during Ramazan 1350.
3. Ashrafi, interview, Tehran, 1995.
4. 'Hashem', interview, Paris, 1994. The person interviewed wishes to remain anonymous.
5. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.
6. Sahami, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
7. Matini, *Iranshenasi* 5/4 (1994) p.863.
8. Sahami, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
9. Matini, *Iranshenasi* 5/4 (1994) p.864.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.* p.865.
12. Shari'ati, C.W.28, pp.429, 456.
13. *Ibid.*, p.441.
14. *Ibid.*, p.457.
15. *Ibid.*, p.520.
16. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.

17. *Ibid.*
18. Shari'ati, C.W.17, p.45.
19. Shari'ati, C.W.24, p.117.
20. Shari'ati, C.W.15, p.183.
21. Davani (1372) p.51.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, p.52.
24. Shari'ati, C.W.1, pp.17–18.
25. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.51.
26. Ansari-Qomi (1351) p.191.
27. M. Moqimi (1351) pp.7, 10.
28. Eslami, S. *Ghogha-ye nafarjam*, Tehran: Shams, 1352, p.127.
29. Ansari-Qomi (1351) pp.390–1.
30. *Ibid.*, p.391.
31. Eslami (1392) pp.11–12.
32. Ansari-Qomi (1351), p.215 and Moqimi (1351) p.8.
33. Shari'ati, C.W.22, p.100, C.W.1, pp.9–12, C.W.16, p.85, 89, C.W.18, pp.172–3.
34. Shari'ati, C.W.9, pp.91–5.
35. *Ibid.*, p.90.
36. Shari'ati, C.W.22, p.87.
37. *Ibid.*, p.83, 92.
38. Ansari-Qomi (1351) p.17. Shari'ati, C.W.22, p.83.
39. Shari'ati, C.W.22, p.264.
40. *Ibid.*, p.275.
41. Moqimi (1351) p.15.
42. Ansari-Zanjani (1351) p.33.
43. Ansari-Qomi (1351) p.225.
44. Omrani in *Mi'ad ba Ali* (1373) p.223.
45. Shari'ati, C.W.21, p.26.
46. Moqimi (1351) pp.83.
47. Shari'ati, C.W.21, p.119.
48. H. Rowshani, *Barrasi va naqd*, vol. 1, Tehran: Chap-e Ettihad, 1351, pp.23–8.
49. *Ibid.*, p.21.
50. Ansari-Qomi (1351) p.7.
51. Shari'ati, C.W.9, pp.59–60.
52. Ansari-Qomi (1351), p.384.
53. *Khabarnam-e Jebbeh-ye Melli-e Iran*, no.31, Esfand 1351.
54. Ansari-Zanjani (1351) p.130.
55. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.73.

56. Shari'ati, C.W.18, pp.177–8.
57. Ehsan Shari'ati, interview, Paris 1992.
58. *Kayhan*, 24 Aban 1359.
59. Eslami (1392)(1351), pp.7–9.
60. Moqimi, *Harj o Marj*, p.14.
61. Anon (Rowshani) *Pasokhi be nameh-e ostad*, Qesmat-e Dovom, n.p, 1354, p.258.
62. *Darsha'i az Maktab-e Eslam*, year 13, no.1, Bahman 1350.
63. Shari'ati, C.W.14, pp.309–10.
64. *Darsha'i az Maktab-e Eslam*, year 13, no.7, Tir 1351.
65. Razmju (1369) p.126.
66. *Ibid.*, p.169.
67. *Ibid.*, p.170.
68. *Darsha'i az Maktab-e Eslam*, year 13, no.9, Mehr 1351.
69. *Ibid.*, Year 13.no.12, Azar 1351.
70. *Asnad-e Enqelab-e Eslami*, vol.1, 1374, p.352.
71. *Ibid.*, vol.5, 1374, pp.144–5.
72. *Ibid.*, p.146.
73. *Ibid.*, vol.1, 1374, p.379.
74. *Ibid.*, vol.2, 1374, pp.206–9.
75. *Seiri dar zendegani-ye Ostad Motahhari* (1370), p.82.
76. *Asnad-e Enqelab-e Eslami*, vol.2, 1374, p.211.
77. *Ibid.*, pp.214–5,250; vol.1, 458, 480, 481.
78. *Ibid.*, vol.5, 1374, p.131.
79. Razmju (1369) p.169.
80. Do'a'i, *Howzeh*, no.45, Mordad, Shahrivar 1370.
81. Farsi (1373), p.310.
82. *Ibid.*, p.311.
83. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.
84. *Khabar-nameh Jebbeh-e Melli-ye Iran*, No 31, Esfand 1351.
85. *Payam-e Mojahed*, no.11, Ordibehesht 1352.
86. Shari'ati, C.W.16, pp.177–9.
87. Dr Kazem Sami, *Kayhan*, 25 Ordibehesht 1359 and 24 Aban 1359.
88. Nekuruh, interview, Paris, 1995.
89. Sami, *Kayhan*, 24 Aban 1359.

90. Shari'ati, C.W.17, p.174 and *Bakhtar-e Emruz*, October 1972, vol.1V, no.30.
91. *Ibid.*
92. Bazargan, interview, Paris 1996.
93. *Ibid.*
94. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.
95. *Ibid.*
96. Shari'ati, C.W.19, p.154.
97. *Ibid.*, p.171.

Chapter Nineteen

1. Shari'ati, C.W.15, p.200.
2. *Ibid.*, p.80.
3. This figure is based on the accounts kept at Hosseiniyeh-e Ershad. I am grateful to Mr Minachi who was kind enough to provide me with this information.
4. Shari'ati, C.W.14, p.1.
5. *Ibid.*, p.7.
6. *Ibid.*, p.8.
7. *Ibid.*, pp.24, 29, 31.
8. *Ibid.*, pp.32–3.
9. *Ibid.*, p.194.
10. *Ibid.*, p.48.
11. *Ibid.*, p.49.
12. *Ibid.*, p.53.
13. *Ibid.*, p.57.
14. *Ibid.*, pp.75–7.
15. *Ibid.*, pp.84–123.
16. *Ibid.*, pp.92, 93, 94, 97, 120–3.
17. *Ibid.*, p.123.
18. *Ibid.*, p.123.
19. Shari'ati, C.W.15, pp.158–9.
20. *Ibid.*, pp.143–6.
21. *Ibid.*, p.106.
22. *Ibid.*, p.108.
23. *Ibid.*, p.78.
24. *Ibid.*, p.189.
25. Shari'ati, C.W.14, p.208.
26. Shari'ati, C.W.15, p.236.
27. *Ibid.*, p.239.
28. *Ibid.*, p.243.
29. *Ibid.*, p.244.
30. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.

31. Shari'ati, C.W.14, pp.289-90.
32. Ibid., p.310.
33. Ibid., p.319.
34. Ibid., p.320.
35. Ibid., p.323.
36. Ibid., pp.309-10.
37. Shari'ati, C.W.15, p.25.
38. Ibid., pp.11-13, 19.
39. Ibid., p.30.
40. Shari'ati, C.W.16, p.212.
41. Shari'ati, C.W.15, p.205.
42. Shari'ati, C.W.20, pp.278-80. C.W.33, vol.2, pp.1275-277.
43. Shari'ati, C.W.20, p.280.
44. Shari'ati, C.W.16, pp.3-4.
45. Ibid., p.172.
46. Ibid., p.173.
47. Shari'ati, C.W.18, p.130.
48. Ibid., p.70.
49. Shari'ati, C.W.16, p.155.
50. Ibid., p.180.
51. Ibid., p.12.
52. Ibid., p.20.
53. Ibid., p.14.
54. Ibid., pp.18-9.
55. Ibid., p.29.
56. Ibid., pp.32-3.
57. Ibid., p.36.
58. Ibid., pp.93-4.
59. Ibid., pp.104-8.
60. Ibid., p.41.
61. Ibid., p.95.
62. Ibid., pp.223.
63. Ibid., pp.228-9.
64. Ibid., pp.223-6.
65. Ibid., p.226.
66. Ibid., pp.134-5.
67. Ibid., pp.230-1.
68. Ibid., p.123.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., p.124.
71. Ibid., p.125.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., p.127.
74. Shari'ati, C.W.17, p.89.
75. Ibid., pp.88, 162.
76. Shari'ati, C.W.18, p.270.
77. Ibid., p.287.
78. Shari'ati, C.W.16, p.208.
79. Shari'ati, C.W.18, p.138.
80. Shari'ati, C.W.16, pp.42-3.
81. Ibid., p.47.
82. Ibid., p.50.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p.57.
85. Ibid., p.62.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., p.69.
88. Ibid., p.63.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid., p.66.
91. Ibid., p.67.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., p.68.
94. Ibid., p.71.
95. Ibid., pp.243, 71.
96. Ibid., p.73.
97. Ibid., p.73, C.W.19, p.70.
98. Shari'ati, C.W.26, pp.288-9.
99. Shari'ati, C.W.16, p.238.
100. Ibid., p.252.
101. Ibid., pp.152-3.
102. Shari'ati, C.W.17, pp.52-5.
103. Ibid., p.56.
104. Shari'ati, C.W.16, p.80. First he referred to Islam as the third side of the triangle and later he replaced Islam with gnosticism. C.W.17, p.223.
105. Shari'ati, C.W.18, p.223.
106. Shari'ati, C.W.17, pp.90, 103.
107. Ibid., pp.199, 223, 224.
108. Ibid., pp.226, 232.
109. Ibid., p.257.
110. Ibid., p.258.
111. Marx, K. and F. Engels (1972); Avineri (ed.) 1969.
112. Shari'ati, C.W.18, pp.203-4.
113. Ibid., p.206.
114. Shari'ati, C.W.16, p.79.
115. Shari'ati, C.W.18, p.42.
116. Shari'ati, C.W.18, p.76.
117. Ibid., p.214.
118. Ibid., p.221.
119. Ibid., p.77.

120. Ibid., p.78.
 121. Ibid., pp.79-84.
 122. Ibid., pp.85-7.
 123. Ibid., p.87.
 124. Ibid., p.235.
- Chapter Twenty**
1. Shari'ati, C.W.15, p.182.
 2. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.180.
 3. Shari'ati, C.W.17, pp.66-7.
 4. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.232. C.W.19, p.281.
 5. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.232.
 6. Shari'ati, C.W.17, p.66.
 7. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.51.
 8. Ibid., p.31.
 9. Ibid., pp.37-9.
 10. Ibid., p.78.
 11. Ibid., pp.110-11.
 12. Ibid., p.196.
 13. Ibid., p.113.
 14. Ibid., p.87.
 15. Ibid.
 16. Ibid., p.78.
 17. Ibid., pp.99, 102.
 18. Ibid., p.95.
 19. Ibid., p.96.
 20. Ibid., pp.25-6, 152-8.
 21. Ibid., p.161.
 22. Ibid., p.126.
 23. Ibid., p.113.
 24. Ibid., pp.50, 133.
 25. Ibid., pp.51, 142.
 26. Ibid., p.50.
 27. Ibid., pp.126, 206.
 28. Ibid., p.233.
 29. Ibid., p.129.
 30. Ibid., p.115.
 31. Ibid., p.126.
 32. Ibid., p.129.
 33. Ibid., p.123.
 34. Ibid., p.260.
 35. Ibid., p.216.
 36. Shari'ati, C.W.19, pp.277-80. C.W.9, pp.219-22.
 37. Shari'ati, C.W.9, pp.237-8, 260.
 38. Shari'ati, C.W.7, pp.208-9.
 39. Ibid., p.209.
 40. Shari'ati, C.W.9, p.215.
 41. Ibid.
 42. Shari'ati, C.W.7, p.208.
 43. Shari'ati, C.W.19, p.286.
 44. Ibid., p.293.
 45. Ibid., pp.294-5.
 46. Ibid., p.297.
 47. Ibid., p.304.
 48. Shari'ati, C.W.17, p.67.
 49. Shari'ati, C.W.26, p.209.
 50. Shari'ati, C.W.7, p.76.
 51. Ibid., pp.265-7.
 52. Shari'ati, C.W.26, p.210.
 53. Ibid.
 54. Ibid.
 55. Ibid., p.213.
 56. Ibid., p.213.
 57. Shari'ati, C.W.7, p.30.
 58. Shari'ati, C.W.26, p.210.
 59. *Bakhtar-e Emruz*, no.24, Esfand 1350.
 60. Shari'ati, C.W.7, p.56.
 61. Shari'ati, C.W.26, pp.241, 245.
 62. Shari'ati, C.W.7, pp.16-21, 33-4.
 63. Ibid., p.64.
 64. Ibid., pp.64-7, 79.
 65. Ibid., p.21.
 66. Ibid., p.43.
 67. Ibid., p.126.
 68. Ibid., p.140.
 69. Ibid.
 70. Ibid., p.150.
 71. Shari'ati, C.W.26, p.243.
 72. Shari'ati, C.W.7, p.60.
 73. Ibid., p.82. C.W.26, pp.292-3.
 74. Shari'ati, C.W.26, p.292.
 75. Shari'ati, C.W.7, p.130.
 76. Ibid., p.87.
 77. Ibid., p.88.
 78. Ibid.
 79. Ibid., p.89.
 80. Ibid., pp.105-6.
 81. Shari'ati, C.W.26, p.243. C.W.7, p.58, 60.
 82. Shari'ati, C.W.7, pp.94-7.

83. Ibid., p.148.
84. Ibid., p.155.
85. Ibid., pp.149–50.
86. Ibid., pp.167–8.
87. Shari'ati, C.W.26, pp.577, 618–20, 630–1.
88. Shari'ati, C.W.19, p.268.

Chapter Twenty-One

1. Omid Saberi in *Motale'at-e Siyasi*, Book 2, Pa'iz 1372, pp.167–8.
2. Madani (1362) vol.2, pp.158–9.
3. Omid Saberi, 1372, pp.160–1.
4. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1993.
5. Ibid.
6. Rowhani (1372) p.192.
7. Ibid., pp.726–7.
8. Shari'at Razavi (1374) p.140. The date of this letter is estimated by Shari'at-Razavi to be August 1971, which seems incorrect, because Shari'ati was not expelled from the University of Mashhad until late September 1971. He was transferred to Tehran in October and his transfer could not have been extended until December of 1971.
9. Shari'ati, C.W.19, pp.200–1.
10. Ibid., p.203.
11. Ibid., p.204.
12. Ibid., p.207.
13. Ibid., p.208.
14. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
15. Rowhani (1372) p.730.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Shari'ati, C.W.18, pp.138–9.
19. Ibid., p.134.
20. Ibid. pp.19, 148, 149, 151, 136, 163, 158.
21. Ibid., pp.205–7.
22. Ibid., pp.173, 235.
23. P. Bazargan, interview, Paris 1996.
24. Lotfollah Meisami, *Kayhan*, 25 Ordibehesht 1359, no.10997.
25. Rowhani (1372) pp.356, 358.
26. P. Bazargan, interview, Paris 1996.
27. T. Haqshenas, interview, Paris 1996.
28. Lotfollah Meisami, *Kayhan*, 25 Ordibehesht 1359.
29. All the information in this paragraph is based on Puran Bazargan, interview, Paris 1996.
30. M. Taleqani, interview, Paris 1996.
31. Shari'ati, C.W.1, pp.228, 230.
32. Meisami, *Kayhan*, 25 Ordibehesht 1359.
33. Abrahamian (1989) p.159. *Mojahed* 6 (July–August 1976), pp.132–45.
34. Momken. M., in Fayaz, A. *Mi'ad ba Shari'ati*, p.56.
35. For a few references see *Mojahed*, nos 21, 22 on 9 and 16 Bahman 1358.
36. *Mojahed*, no.110, 30 Bahman 1359.
37. Ghaffari (1374) p.97.
38. Farsi (1373) p.75.
39. Shari'ati, C.W.9, Introduction, p.j.
40. *Khabarnamah Jebbeh-e Melli-ye Iran*, No 31, Esfand 1351.
41. *Payam-e Mojahed*, no.12, Khordad 1352.
42. Mirzazadeh in Fayaz, *Mi'ad ba Shari'ati*, p.99., interview, Paris 1996.
43. This paragraph is based on Amini's interview in Mahdavi (1372) p.180. I have also checked the information in the book with the tapes produced by the B.B.C Persian service.
44. Alam, *Yaddashtha*, vol. 3, pp.312–3.
45. *Kayhan*, 28 Mordad 1359.
46. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.236.
47. Ibid., p.217.
48. Ibid., pp.268–9.
49. Ibid., pp.269, 274–6.
50. Shari'ati, C.W.1, p. 13.
51. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.11.
52. Rowhani (1372) p.237.
53. Shari'ati, C.W.18, p.237.
54. Ibid., p.250.
55. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.
56. Ali-Baba'i in *Kayhan*, 24 Aban 1359.
57. Ibid.

58. *Bakhtar-e Emruz*, January 1973, vol.IV. no.33.
59. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.
60. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1994.
61. Ibid.
62. Davani, (1372) p.67.
63. Ibid.
64. Shari'ati, C.W.34, p.5.
65. Ibid., p.11.
66. Shari'ati, C.W.1, p.135.
67. Ibid., p.140.
68. Ibid., p.142.
69. Ibid., pp.145–6.
70. *Etelat*, 5 Tir 1358.
71. Ghaffari (1374) p.65.
72. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.174.
73. Shari'ati, C.W.1, p.54. The letter is dated 24 Aban 1351. The official date of Ershad's closure by the police is 26 Aban. From the content of the letter it is evident that it was written several days after the closure of Ershad, therefore, 24 Aban, before the closure is extremely unlikely.
74. Ibid., p.56.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., p.60.
77. Ibid., p.63.
78. Ibid.
79. The person interviewed wishes to remain anonymous.
80. Rowhani (1372) pp.243, 772.
81. Ehsan Shari'ati, interview, Paris 1991.
82. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.174. The date of SAVAK's raid is estimated on the basis of Reza Shari'at-Razavi's account see pp.175–6.
83. Shari'at-Razavi, 1374, pp.176–7.
84. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1995.
85. Safavieh, interview, Mashhad, 1995.
86. Ehsan Shari'ati, interview, Paris 1991.
87. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.
88. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1995.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.

Chapter Twenty-Two

1. Rowhani (1372) p.239.
2. Ibid., p.761.
3. Ibid., p.740.
4. Ibid., pp.739, 743, 760.
5. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.
6. Ibid., p.742.
7. Ibid., pp.240, 766.
8. Ibid., p.748.
9. Ibid., p.761.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p.774.
12. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.181. Ehsan Shari'ati, interview, Paris, 1991.
13. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.161.
14. Ibid.
15. Mirzazadeh in Fayaz (1973) pp.96–7.
16. *Kayhan*, no.11072, 28 Mordad 1359.
17. Ghaffari (1374) p.97.
18. Mirzazadeh in Fayaz (1373) p.97.
19. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris 1996.
20. The person interviewed wishes to remain anonymous.
21. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris 1996.
22. Ehsan Shari'ati in Fayaz (1373) p.155.
23. Nehzat-e Azadi Iran, *Yadnameh Shahid-e Javid*, p.49.
24. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) pp.184.
25. *Khabar-namah Jebbeh-e Melli-ye Iran*, No 36, Farvardin 1353 and no.37, Khordad 1353.
26. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1993.
27. Mirzazadeh, interview, Paris 1996.
28. Ehsan Shari'ati in Fayaz, 1373, p.153.
29. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1993.
30. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) pp.188–9. Pajum (1370) p.122. On the basis of Mohammad-Taqi's account the meeting took place at Qasr prison, while on the basis of Shari'at-Razavi's account it occurred at Komiteh prison. In view of Mohammad-Taqi's account that Ali was wearing a black suit it is most probable that the meeting was at Qasr. At Komiteh, Ali would have probably been wearing

- his usual grey prison uniform.
31. The information on Shari'ati in this paragraph is based on Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.190.
 32. Alam, *Yaddashtha*, p.321.
 33. *Asnad-e Enqelab-e Eslami*, vol.2, pp.193-6.
 34. Ibid., vol.4, 1374, p.255.
 35. Ibid., vol.4, 1374, p.279.
 36. Minachi, interview, Tehran, 1996.
 37. Ibid.
 38. *Yadnameh Shahid-e Javid* (1356) pp.39-40. Puran Shari'at-Razavi's response to Faridi in *Kayhan*, 19 Mehr 1359.
 39. Ibid., (1356) p.51.
 40. *Kayhan*, 28 Khordad 1358 and Shari'at-Razavi (1374) p.190.
 41. Rowhani (1372) p.772.
 42. Ibid., p.773.
 43. Ibid., p.243.
 44. *Kayhan*, 9 Mehr 1359 and 13 Mehr 1359.
 45. *Kayhan*, 19 Mehr 1359.
 46. Matini, *Iranshenasi* 5/4 (1994) p.889.
 47. Shari'ati, C.W.27, p.214.
 48. In the SAVAK document published by Rowhani, the name of the article was 'Mankind, Islam and Western philosophies', In *Kayhan* it became 'Mankind, Islam and Western doctrines'.
 49. *Bayaniyeh-e e'lam-e mavaze'-e ideologik-e Sazeman-e Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran*. vol.1, n.p., n.d, p.124.
 50. Ibid., pp.114-18.
 51. Shari'ati, C.W.26, p.323.
 52. Ibid., p.292.
 53. Compare Shari'ati, C.W.17, pp.223, 224, 226, with; C.W.24, pp.50, 51, 54.
 54. Shari'ati, C.W.24, pp.42, 123-4.
 55. Shari'ati, C.W.17, p.112.
 56. Shari'ati, C.W.24, pp.92, 103, 123, 131.
 57. Ibid., p.93.
 58. Ibid., p.123.
 59. Ibid., p.131.
 60. Ibid., p.78.
 61. Ibid., p.89.
 62. Shari'ati, C.W.17, pp.228, 240-1.
 63. Shari'ati, C.W.18, p.205.
 64. Ibid., p.137.
 65. Shari'ati, C.W.17, pp.222-4.
 66. Shari'ati, C.W.18, p.103.
 67. Ibid., pp.137-8.
 68. Shari'ati, C.W.17, p.233.
 69. Ibid., p.210.
 70. Shari'ati, C.W.24, pp.103-4.
 71. Shari'ati, C.W.17, pp.209-10 and C.W.24, pp.94-5.
 72. Shari'ati, C.W.17, pp.213, 219, 222, 256.
 73. Shari'ati, C.W.24, pp.99-101.
 74. Shari'ati, C.W.17, pp.222, 256.
 75. Ibid., p.217, 219, 222.
 76. Shari'ati, C.W.24, pp.65, 69, 75, 99.
 77. Ibid., pp.108-9.
 78. Shari'ati, C.W.1, p.94.
 79. Shari'ati, C.W.4, p.11.
 80. Shari'ati, C.W.18, p.223.
 81. Shari'ati, C.W.24, p.123.
 82. Shari'ati, C.W.7, p.82.
 83. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) pp.206-7, *Khabarnameh*, no.45, Esfand 1354, *Payam-e Mojahed*, no.28, Farvardin 1355.
 84. Shari'at-Razavi (1374) pp.206-7.
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